

King receives condolences from Arab fund chairman

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday received the chairman of the board of directors and director general of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Abdul Latif Hamad, who offered his condolences on the passing away of King Hussein. During the meeting, King Abdullah and Hamad discussed the fund's efforts to support Jordanian economic activities and possibilities of boosting such assistance. Both sides stressed the importance of the fund's support to projects in the fields of water, education, social services. The King expressed hope that joint cooperation would continue. Hamad stressed that the fund will continue to support the country and help improve its economic situation. Attending the meeting were Prime Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabarti and Planning Minister Rima Khalaf.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
 جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Hizbollah rejects modifications to ceasefire agreement

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Shiite Muslim Hizbollah said Sunday it had achieved a "balance of terror" in southern Lebanon that protected Lebanese citizens, and any change to the 1996 ceasefire agreement was "unacceptable." "Any change in these arrangements... is categorically ruled out," Hizbollah chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah told a rally here, saying that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk was coming to the region Monday with such a change as his main aim. He said the purpose of any modification was to "deprive the resistance of its right to fire Katyusha missiles at northern Israel when the enemy perpetrates a massacre against civilians, or targets the infrastructure in Lebanon."

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Labour, Geshar announce alliance

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The main opposition Labour Party and the small Geshar Party of former Foreign Minister David Levy announced Sunday that they had linked up to fight the May 17 elections. Levy has been given the third slot in the list of candidates of the Israel One Front, making him certain to be elected. Labour has promised him a top ranking position if they form the next government. Israel One is a front put together by Labour, which also contains the moderate religious Meimad Party. Two other members of Geshar and one of Meimad have also been awarded slots on the list of candidates high enough to ensure their election.

Ship grounded off Lebanon coast

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese tugboats tried on Sunday to refloat a Turkish cargo ship carrying sulphuric acid which was grounded off the northern coast. "The Turkish ship Serge was leaving Lebanon when it hit rocks and got stuck late yesterday. Efforts are being made to refloat it," Ghassan Gera, the Lebanon representative of the environmental group Greenpeace, told Reuters by telephone from Selaata port. State television showed film of the ship, which was carrying 6,000 tonnes of acid from the Lebanese acid company, Gera said the chemical had apparently not leaked into the sea.

Seven killed in lorry accident

NEW DELHI (API) — A motor tractor lugging a lorry full of wedding party guests went out of control and plunged into a river in northern India killing seven children, a domestic news agency reported Sunday. Five other children were seriously injured in the accident late Saturday near Sultanpur town in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh. The region is 325 kilometres southeast of India's capital New Delhi. The lorry was carrying 20 people when it toppled into the Gomti River.

Chemobyl station safely restarted

KIEV (R) — Ukraine on Sunday safely restarted the only working reactor at its troubled Chernobyl nuclear power station, following almost three months of repair work, plant officials told Reuters. "Today [Sunday], at 1655 GMT the reactor was switched into [Ukraine's] energy system," Boris Baranov, head of the station's technical shift, told Reuters by telephone from Chernobyl, some 150 kilometres north of the capital Kiev. Baranov said the restarting procedure had been launched as planned late on Saturday and after tests on its two generators reactor Number 3 had been reconnected to Ukraine's grid.

Colombia chopper crashes in hunt for death squad

BOGOTA (R) — A Russian-made Mi-17 helicopter crashed on Sunday in dense fog in northwest Colombia as the army hunted for the mountain stronghold of the country's most-feared right-wing death squad, authorities said. Six of the eight soldiers on board were injured, some of them seriously, when the chopper went down in a mountain range known as the Nudo de Paramillo, an army spokesman said. The area, on the edge of Cordoba and Antioquia provinces, is the power-base of Carlos Castano, head of a nationwide alliance of illegal paramilitary gangs known as the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC).

King, Arab leaders visit Bahrain to offer condolences on emir's death

Agencies

HIS MAJESTY King Abdullah returned to Amman Sunday afternoon following a brief visit to Manama, where he offered his condolences to the ruling family in Bahrain over the passing of the late Emir Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh, who died Saturday.

King Abdullah, who met with the emir's successor Hamad Ben Isa Al Khalifeh and other members of the family, paid tribute to the late emir, praising his role and his services to the Arab Nation.

King Abdullah commended the strong relations built between Jordan and Bahrain through the efforts of the late King Hussein and the late emir of Bahrain, stressing that Jordan is keen on promoting these ties in all fields.

King Abdullah was accompanied by a delegation including Prime Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh and Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabarti as well as a number of Princes and ministers.

Earlier on Sunday in Bahrain, Arab leaders paid their condolences to the Gulf state's new emir, Sheikh Hamad, on the death of his father, hailed as the "people's monarch."

In keeping with Islamic tradition, Sheikh Isa was buried in a simple funeral on Saturday before sunset, on the same day as his sudden death of a heart attack.

His eldest son and heir, Sheikh Hamad, has since been shaking hands with a stream of Bahraini mourners as well as Arab leaders who converged on the island state to pay their last respects.

In the large open courtyard at the entrance to the emir's palace, thick lines of people pressed forward to offer condolences. In turn they shook their new leader's hand and murmured words of comfort.

Every so often the emir would emerge from the recep-



His Majesty King Abdullah pays condolences Sunday to the new emir of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad, on the death of his father, Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh, who died March 6 in Manama (AFP photo)

tion to meet one of the visiting foreign dignitaries. He would usher them back onto sofas where they would sip tea for a few minutes before departing.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said Sheikh Isa's death was "a great loss for the Arab World and the Palestinian people in particular," whose cause he had supported, the official news agency GNA reported.

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, whose country has a territorial dispute with Manama, met the new emir to convey "the sadness of the Qatari people." But Doha did not call off its municipal vote on Monday.

From Oman, Sultan Qaboos assured Bahrain's emir of Muscat's support after "the death of our brother," while Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah was already in Bahrain late Saturday to pay his condolences.

Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz of Bahrain's mighty neighbour Saudi Arabia

was also among the first to fly in to meet Sheikh Hamad, while several Arab countries declared periods of mourning.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak travelled to Bahrain on Sunday.

Syrian President Hafez Assad also flew in to praise the late emir for his "wise policies which served the Arab World and its just causes."

From outside the Arab World, French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine interrupted a Gulf tour to deliver the condolences of President Jacques Chirac and his country.

In special black-and-white editions on Sunday, Bahraini newspapers hailed the man who led the country for 38 years.

"He was a down-to-earth people's monarch... he was a father figure," the Gulf Daily News said, pouring praise on Sheikh Isa for his "nobility, simplicity, humbleness and kindness."

The newspaper also listed a

string of cancellations for planned events as the country plunged into three months of official mourning.

"The nation reeled in shock as its people struggled to come to terms with the sudden death... tragedy left the country dazed and confused," said the Bahrain Tribune newspaper, which ran pictures of weeping women.

The daily said the new emir was "a man of learning."

Sheikh Hamad, sworn in before the cabinet on Saturday, has a reputation for strong leadership born of a military breeding and years spent developing the armed forces.

"I am assuming the rule of Bahrain, relying on God, exerting all the effort possible to serve our country and our people," Sheikh Hamad said.

Appointed crown prince in 1964, he took an active role after independence from Britain in 1971 in building the army into today's 11,000-strong force.

JTC chairman's resignation under government review

By Ghadeer Taber and Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — The government Sunday was still undecided on the resignation of Jordan Telecommunications Corporation Board Chairman Ali Shukri, who accused the newly appointed telecommunications minister of interfering in the company's affairs.

"The government is discussing Shukri's resignation, but a final decision [on whether to accept it] will be made Tuesday during the regular Cabinet session," an official said Sunday.

In his resignation letter addressed to Prime Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, Shukri said Telecommunications Minister Jamal Sarairoh ordered that a project to connect the Kingdom's schools to the Internet be stopped immediately. The late King Hussein had ordered that the country's 755 public schools be connected to the Internet.

The late King sent a letter in January praising the JTC's work and directed that two projects — Internet and data division and a mobile phone service network — be launched.

Last month, five international telecommunications firms submitted bids to supply and set up the second mobile phone network in Jordan. JTC officials had said they hoped to operate the service with nationwide coverage by August.

Sarairoh was not available for comment Sunday.

"The Minister of Transport, Post and Telecommunications has no right to interfere with the company's board of directors' decisions regarding its operations, especially when they are the directives of His Majesty the late King Hussein," Shukri said in his letter sent to the prime minister Saturday.

Shukri told the Jordan Times that Sarairoh also demanded by telephone that the firm immediately transfer JD12 million to the treasury.

"The minister has no right to ask anyone in the company to transfer money or stop a project that has been approved by the board," Shukri said Sunday, accusing the minister of trying to "destroy" the work done to implement the late King's directives.

According to a JTC official, "each month the government and the company meet to discuss the payment [to the treasury] based on its projects and expenditures."

Last year, the company transferred JD114 million to the government, JD7 million on a monthly basis and JD30 million in extra revenues.

Meanwhile, Shukri insisted that the payment revenue to the government was not yet due and was not agreed upon.

"The way be [Sarairoh] took the decision tells me that he has a personal agenda that does not go hand-in-

hand with the wishes of His Majesty the late King Hussein," Shukri was quoted by the English-language Arab Daily as saying.

Analysts said they had expected the outspoken chairman and Sarairoh to clash sooner or later over how to run the state-owned company, especially on how to privatise the firm.

"Sarairoh, who has championed selling a large stake of the company to a strategic partner, would definitely have been at odds with Shukri, a vocal opponent to this option who favours a public offering of the firm's shares on the Amman Financial Market to Jordanians and foreign investors," they said.

The government last October suspended the sale of a 40 per cent stake in the company to a strategic partner after one of the two contenders withdrew from the race.

The decision to suspend the telecommunications sale signalled the end of a stormy process, thrown off course many a time in the last two years when the privatisation process started in earnest.

A recently completed evaluation by Arthur Andersen recommended that at present an initial public offering "with the right condition is likely to lead to a higher value for JTC than a sale to a strategic partner."

Settlers launch new West Bank hilltop grab

DAHARIYA (AFP) — Jewish settlers set up seven mobile homes on a hilltop near this Palestinian town over the weekend in their latest bid to grab more West Bank land, Palestinian sources said Sunday.

The Israelis, from the settlements of Tene and Omarim at the southern tip of the West Bank, bulldozed a dirt access road to the hilltop and hauled in seven mobile homes and a water tank late Saturday, said army spokesman Peter Lerner.

Palestinians in the area said the new enclave is situated about two kilometres from the twin settlements of Tene and Omarim and just south of Dahariya, a Palestinian town of 20,000.

Lerner said the mobile homes had been placed

without permission on what Israel calls "state land" — areas where Palestinians have not proven formal ownership.

"An officer was sent to the site to get them to stop the activity," he told AFP.

But he said the army would not move immediately to clear the mobile homes, choosing instead to freeze the situation while it investigates settler plans for the area.

Settlers, with explicit encouragement from Israel's right-wing government, have been expanding their hold on West Bank land in a bid to create new facts on the ground before Israeli general elections in May.

The militants fear a possible defeat of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by

more moderate candidates who could order a freeze on settlement expansion to facilitate peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Defence Minister Moshe Arens, leading government hawks, have both said settlers should expand their presence in the West Bank ahead of the elections.

In response, settlers have attempted to move onto dozens of new plots of land, mostly trying to create new hilltop enclaves.

In some instances the army has stepped and forced the settlers to back down.

But often authorities say the settlers are operating in areas included in broad "master plans" for the settlements.

U.S. aid package to Jordan not in jeopardy — official

AMMAN (J.T.) — An aid package to Jordan cleared the U.S. Senate last week, but is now entangled in a row in the House of Representatives that may delay the package slightly but is not expected to jeopardise it.

The \$100 million package, promised to Jordan by U.S. President Bill Clinton, moved to the House floor last Thursday, but news reports said that the bill to which the aid is attached — a bill for nearly \$1 billion in aid to hurricane-battered Central America —

has been held back by sparring between Republicans and Democrats who differ over how to pay for it.

News reports said Republican leaders have called for the House Appropriations Committee to propose spending cuts to pay for the aid, namely cuts to a variety of federal programmes, including welfare funding, food stamps for poor Americans and environmental initiatives. Democrats claim that cuts to the welfare or food stamps programme is tantamount to usurping assistance for needy Americans to pay for the needy elsewhere.

Following the death of King Hussein, President Clinton asked Congress to urgently approve \$300 million in additional aid to Jordan, to be distributed in three tranches of \$100 million over the next three fiscal years. The first tranche should reach Jordan this summer, and includes \$50 million in economic aid and \$50 million in military aid.

The package is over and above the \$225 million Jordan receives annually from the United States.

A U.S. embassy official in Amman indicated that although differences in the House over how to fund the aid may delay the package, he said it is not likely to be jeopardised by House quarrelling.

"The administration has specifically asked Congress to approve a package worth \$300 million to [be given] over three years' time, and this has the full support of the White House," the official said.

The Israelis, from the settlements of Tene and Omarim at the southern tip of the West Bank, bulldozed a dirt access road to the hilltop and hauled in seven mobile homes and a water tank late Saturday, said army spokesman Peter Lerner.

Palestinians in the area said the new enclave is situated about two kilometres from the twin settlements of Tene and Omarim and just south of Dahariya, a Palestinian town of 20,000.

Lerner said the mobile homes had been placed

Palestinians extend legislature, avoid issue of May statehood declaration

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — The Palestinian legislature launched its fourth annual session Sunday, but skirted the issue of whether the council's mandate would extend beyond May 4 when interim autonomy accords with Israel expire.

The elected legislative council also reelected Ahmed Qoreia, a veteran peace negotiator with Israel, as its speaker during the meeting in Gaza City.

Qoreia told deputies that the council and other bodies created to administer autonomous parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip under the Oslo peace agreements would continue to function after the five-year interim period laid down in the accords expires in May.

He insisted this decision in no way prejudiced the Palestinians' declared intention to unilaterally declare the creation of an independent state on May 4 — a move strongly opposed by Israel and foreign governments.

"The Palestinian leadership still has to decide what to do on May 4, but this will not affect the functioning of the Palestinian autonomy institu-

tions," said Qoreia, who is also known as Abu Alaa.

Palestinian National Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat has left open the possibility of postponing a declaration of independence beyond May in exchange for clear international backing, notably from the United States and Europe, for the Palestinian right to statehood.

Also Sunday, Palestinian lawmakers inaugurated an annual Democracy Day while acknowledging that democracy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was still a work in progress.

Hanan Ashrawi, a legislator and a former member of Arafat's cabinet, said the PNA needed to do more to ensure basic freedoms and uphold the rule of law.

"We see serious shortcomings particularly when it comes to the way in which the legislative council is being dealt with [by the executive authority]," she told Reuters.

Lawmakers have repeatedly accused the PNA administration of ignoring decisions and recommendations by the three-year-old legislative

council.

"Democracy in a state of emergence in Palestine has not yet been completed as a comprehensive system of thought and of applicability, so we are still working on engraining and consolidating the principle of democracy," Ashrawi said.

Palestinian deputies differed sharply over the leadership's decision to simply open a new legislative session without a clear reference to May 4.

"The third annual council session ended today and nothing says the next one must run its full term because technically the legislature ceases to exist on May 4," said Ziad Abu Amr.

But Abdul Jawad Saleh, a former minister and critic of Arafat, said the failure to declare that the legislative mandate will expire in May plays into the hands of Israeli hardliners who hope to prevent Palestinian statehood.

"This is an indicator that the interim period is continuing and I'm afraid the interim status will simply become the final status — it is a victory for the Israeli right-wing," he told Sunday's session.

According to the Oslo interim

agreements, Israel and the Palestinians should have completed negotiations on a permanent peace arrangement for the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab east Jerusalem by May 4.

But the negotiations, which Palestinians want to result in their own state, have deadlocked under the hard-line Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who came to power in June 1996 and strongly opposes Palestinian independence.

Netanyahu's handling of the peace process contributed to the collapse of his coalition government in December and new elections are to be held on May 17.

Arab and Western governments have warned Arafat that a May 4 declaration of statehood would only help the reelection chances of Netanyahu, who faces a stiff challenge from more dovish candidates.

Under the Oslo interim accords, the PNA has so far gained full or partial control over 60 per cent of the Gaza Strip, 29 per cent of the West Bank and none of east Jerusalem.



Ahmed Qoreia waves Sunday after he was reelected for the fourth time as speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council at a special session held at the Shawa Centre in Gaza City. On the right stands Saeb Erekat (AP photo)

Palestinians hunted by Israel for rash of attacks in Jerusalem, West Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli security services hunted Sunday for Palestinians suspected of carrying out two stabbing attacks in Jerusalem and the shooting of a Jewish settler in the West Bank, officials said.

A Palestinian woman was meanwhile arrested Sunday after throwing a knife at an Israeli security guard at offices of the National Insurance Institute in Jerusalem, police said.

The woman, a 23-year-old divorcee, was apparently distraught over family problems and threw the knife not to kill the guard but to be arrested, police spokeswoman Linda Menuhin said. The guard was not injured.

Police reported no leads however in the stabbing Friday of an ultra-Orthodox Jew near Arab east Jerusalem's Old City or a knife attack Saturday night on an Israeli soldier in the city. They were also still investigating the shooting Saturday

night of a Jewish settler who was guarding road construction equipment in the West Bank.

A police spokesman said a second guard who witnessed the shooting was being questioned Sunday to determine if it was a politically motivated attack or an attempt to steal construction equipment.

The witness reported seeing two men flee on foot after shooting and seriously wounding Arkady Lishansky in the thigh and abdomen. Lishansky was reported in stable condition Sunday in a Tel Aviv area hospital.

In Jerusalem, the soldier was stabbed in the back and slightly wounded Saturday night by an assailant who then fled in a waiting car, Menuhin said.

Police backed by the Shin Bet secret service and a helicopter searched throughout the night for the attackers. Police believe the stabbing was carried out by Palestinians for "nationalistic" motives.

On Friday Aharon Levkowitz, 49, was stabbed in the neck as he walked from the Old City in Arab east Jerusalem to the nearby ultra-Orthodox Jewish quarter of Mea Shearim.

He was declared in moderate and stable condition after undergoing surgery. Israeli security officials have warned that they expected an upsurge in attacks by Palestinian militants in the run-up to Israeli general elections in May.

Defence Minister Moshe Arens told a parliamentary panel last week that Israel believed the Palestinian National Authority was working to halt major anti-Israel bombings and other attacks prior to the elections.

But he said he expected militants opposed to peace accords signed by PNA President Yasser Arafat with Israel to carry out isolated shootings, stabbings and attempted kidnappings of soldiers instead.



Israeli police officers arrest a protester, member of the organisation 'Red Line,' which advocates an Israeli withdrawal from its self proclaimed security zone in South Lebanon. Members of the Red Line group blocked traffic outside the Israeli Defence Ministry Sunday and had to be forcibly removed by police (AP photo)

Hoss did not agree to security talks with Israel — Syria

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria, the main power in neighbouring Lebanon, said Sunday that Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss has not agreed to discuss border security arrangements with Israel.

"Hoss called for an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon and did not agree at all to security arrangements as Israeli officials claim," said Tishrin, the official organ of the Syrian government.

The Lebanese prime minister also "did not mention disarmament of the Lebanese resistance, and Lebanon's position on this topic is known," the newspaper added.

"Successive Lebanese governments have insisted on implementation of [U.N. Security Council] Resolution 425 to the letter," it said. The 1978 resolution calls for Israel to withdraw unconditionally from Lebanon, where it maintains a buffer zone to prevent cross-border attacks. Syrian- and Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas conduct most of the anti-Israeli attacks in Lebanon.

"Beirut has several times rejected reaching an accord with Israel, in the belief that the 1949 [Lebanese-Israeli] armistice agreement was still in effect,"

Tishrin said.

The Syrian daily accused Israel of "putting forward security arguments to get Lebanon to part with its land and its sovereignty."

"Israel's game consists of imposing evil conditions on Lebanon such as disarming the resistance, halting its operations, setting up advanced Israeli positions on Lebanese land and merging [Antoine] Lahad's [pro-Israeli] militia with the Lebanese national army," it said.

"All these conditions go against 425 and allow Israeli leaders to blackmail the Lebanese government and are rejected by the Lebanese people and officials," Tishrin said.

Hoss indicated Saturday that Lebanon is ready to provide the security guarantees sought by Israel, although not through negotiations.

"Security and stability exist across Lebanon except for the Israeli-occupied zone, and it could be the same along the frontier if the enemy withdraws," Hoss said in a statement. The Lebanese premier also said that a "withdrawal of the occupation forces would revive the armistice agreement, which means that security would exist along the border."

Israeli ultra-Orthodox radio host arrested for threat to kill leftist MP

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police arrested on Sunday the operator of an ultra-Orthodox pirate radio station who broadcast calls for the murder of a leftist member of parliament, police said.

Israel Bundak, who operates the Voice of the East radio out of a residential building in occupied Jerusalem, surrendered to police on Sunday and was immediately placed in custody, a police spokesman said.

Police launched an investigation into Bundak on Saturday after he called for the murder of Yossi Sarid, leader of the leftist Meretz Party and an outspoken critic of ultra-Orthodox attempts to impose strict religious law in Israel.

Bundak, speaking over the sound of gunfire and music from a cowboy film, said on Friday that Sarid should be killed "because he doesn't like our religion or our station."

Before entering a police station in the occupied city, Bundak told reporters he had only been "kidding" as part of satiric shows for last week's Jewish festival of Purim.

"I apologised, but Sarid didn't want to hear it and has started a witchhunt," Bundak said.

Police also raided the Jerusalem apartment where Voice of the East was broadcasting and seized all Bundak's radio equipment, a spokesman said.

Voice of the East is one of several pirate radio stations

run by supporters of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, the third biggest group in the outgoing Israeli parliament.

In a controversial decision last month, the governing majority in parliament passed a law to legalise the pirate stations run by Shas and another operated by right-wing religious settlers in the West Bank.

Opponents said the new law was pushed through by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to buy support from religious and right-wing voters in May general elections.

Sarid, a passionate supporter of a secular state and a hate figure for the ultra-Orthodox, had called for the authorities to close down the Shas station.

Princess Basma urges stepping up activities of Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma Sunday called for intensifying the development efforts and activities of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development.

The Princess, addressing a meeting attended by fund employees and heads of social development centres from various governorates, spoke about the change of the fund's name from the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) to the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development.

The fund's new name, she said, embodies the noble mes-

sage of the Hashemites pursued by the late King Hussein and initiated by the Kingdom's founder, the late King Abdullah and the late King Talal and the Hashemite queens, who endeavoured to serve all Jordanians.

Princess Basma said the Hashemite message has been passed on to His Majesty King Abdullah, who now leads the march as the head of the Hashemite family and shoulders the responsibilities for the country.

Princess Basma said King Hussein was a source of inspiration in major achievements

accomplished in many fields.

She said King Hussein was a supporter of the fund and was behind the fund's main achievements in development, adding that the late King was always keen to know about the public services offered by the fund and always provided directives for future plans.

The late King Hussein envisaged social work as the most effective way to improve the living condition of individuals and local communities, added Princess Basma.

Believing in the right of all citizens to a decent living, the King was behind initiatives in

this concern and supported them with all his might, according to Princess Basma.

Inspired by the late King's spirit and thoughts, in respect of the march he led to achieve progress and prosperity for Jordan and in commitment to his eternal message which is now borne by King Abdullah, the fund will exert all efforts to uphold the King Hussein's motto, "The citizens are our most precious asset." The fund pledges to adopt this logo as an incentive to attain its meaning. The new name of the fund, The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human

Development, has been chosen to underline the translation of his message to facts on the ground.

In memory of the late Queen Alia, who passed away in the line of duty to the Kingdom, Princess Basma said the fund's social development centre in Tafila will be named after Queen Alia and be known from now on by the name of "The Queen Alia Centre for Social Development" and the Hashemite competition will be changed to "The Queen Alia Competition for Voluntary Social Work."

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two Nobel Peace laureates, who have added their voices to growing civilian protest around the world against the U.N. sanctions regime on Iraq, departed for Baghdad yesterday along with a group of American peace activists.

Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize winners in 1976 and 1980, respectively, have joined the American Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), the oldest interfaith peace organisation in the United States. They are accompanied by FoR executive director the Reverend John Dear, Pres-

Nobel prize laureates lead group of peace activists to Iraq

ident of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation Akadim Chikandamina, and two representatives of Voices in the Wilderness (VoW), a U.S. humanitarian organisation that has made more than 20 trips to Iraq to deliver medicine and toys to children suffering in Iraqi hospitals.

Kathy Kelly, co-founder and coordinator of VoW, said the group is travelling to Iraq with the aim "of highlighting the humanitarian disaster in Iraq and to ask the U.S. government and the U.N. Security

council to lift the economic sanctions, which have promoted neither peace nor regional disarmament, but have caused nine years of widespread suffering."

The delegation will visit schools and hospitals, where, according to the United Nations Children's Fund, at least 200 children die each day.

UNICEF estimates that at least one million Iraqis have died as a direct result of the economic sanctions, and that once-preventable diseases have become endemic and

deadly plagues in the Iraqi society.

"In any language, that is called genocide," said Maguire, who hails from North Ireland. "We've welcomed [U.S. President] Clinton to help us resolve problems non-violently in Northern Ireland. Could he and [Vice President Al] Gore not sit down and talk with the leaders of Iraq?"

Maguire won the Nobel Peace Prize after organising the largest peace demonstrations in the history of Northern

Ireland. She is the co-founder of the Peace People Community in Belfast, the city that has witnessed the lion's share of bloodshed in the North Ireland conflict.

Adolfo Perez Esquivel, an Argentinian national, was awarded a Nobel Prize when he was the Latin American Coordinator for the Service of Peace and Justice (SERPAJ). He was arrested, imprisoned and tortured by Argentine police in April 1977 for his work in supporting human rights in that country. No

charges were ever brought against him, although he was held as an alleged "subversive" for 14 months. He travels extensively supporting human rights struggles around the world.

On this trip to Iraq, Reverend Dear will deliver 1,000 "peace covenants," documents which have been signed by North American religious and secular communities, apologising for the way in which the United States has treated the Iraqi people, a FoR press release said.

"If this humanitarian disaster were occurring anywhere else in the world besides Iraq, and the perpetrator were anyone but the United States and the United Nations," he said, "[it] would be considered genocide."

The VoW group began their efforts in the early 1990s. They are supported by cash or in-kind donations of medicines or other necessary items from ordinary Americans who protest the sanctions on Iraq, which the Voices group calls "U.S.-U.N.-sponsored sanc-

tions." All delegation members pay their own travel and accommodation fares on trips to Iraq. They travel to Baghdad in violation of U.S. federal law, and late last year, some members were served a prepenalty notice, indicating that the U.S. government intended to levy several hundred thousand dollars for their violation of sanctions regulations, particularly the importation of medicine and toys to sick Iraqi children. The group said they would not pay the fines, and yesterday, Kelly indicated that so far, no further action has been taken by the U.S. government.

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PROGRAMME TWO

19:10News headlines
19:35Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00Islamic History in Jordan
21:30On the Banks of Jordan
22:00News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:35Fajr
05:52(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:46Dhuhr
15:06Asr
17:41Maghreb
18:58Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifich, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifich Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Warm weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds northeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman10/23
Aqaba15/29
Deserts07/24
Jordan Valley2/30

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 24 Aqaba 31 Humidity readings: Amman 20 per cent, Aqaba 15 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Mazharah5150312
Dr. Wissam Hazzayn4748563
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyim4620115
Dr. Fakhr Tayeh4915880
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Lutfi Shibli(02)241789
Fou'ad Pharmacy(02)275360
ZARQA:
Dr. Ziyad Jghalim(05)992991
Palestine Pharmacy(05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdi5666317
Hussein Medical Centre5858566
Luzumli4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Alkhalid Maternity4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5630701
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Mushar Hospital5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)27275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital(02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02)7102831, (02)7102011

Speciality Hospital ..(02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)201411

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
04:15Jeddah (add) (RJ)
04:30Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:15Sanaa (RJ)
07:45Jeddah (RJ)
08:30Damascus (RJ)
08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
15:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
16:25London (RJ)
16:40Cairo (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
18:05Kuwait (RJ)

Other Flights

04:10London (BA)
08:20Alexandria (BA)
09:30Cairo (MS)
10:00Khartoum (SD)
11:30Sanaa (TY)
12:45Kiev (6U)
13:20Bahrain (GF)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:25Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50Istanbul (SD)
18:40Beirut (ME)
20:05Tel Aviv (LY)
20:30 Frankfurt, Damascus (LH)
01:25Athens (OA)
02:00Milan (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
08:50Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
23:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
Royal Wings (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
21:00Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

Other Flights

04:45Alexandria (BA)
06:00Istanbul (TK)
07:25Paris (AF)
09:05London (BA)
10:30Cairo (MS)
11:05Istanbul (SD)
12:30Paris (TY)
14:00Kiev (6U)
14:10Bahrain (GF)
15:35Doha (QR)
15:50Vienna (OS)
16:30Dubai (EK)
18:50Khartoum (SD)
20:00Beirut (ME)
20:50Tel Aviv (LY)
02:45Athens (OA)
03:00Milan (AZ)

Other Flights

04:10London (BA)
08:20Alexandria (BA)
09:30Cairo (MS)
10:00Khartoum (SD)
11:30Sanaa (TY)
12:45Kiev (6U)
13:20Bahrain (GF)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:25Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
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18:40Beirut (ME)
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20:30 Frankfurt, Damascus (LH)
01:25Athens (OA)
02:00Milan (AZ)

Other Flights

Royal Wings (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
21:00Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)



HER MAJESTY Queen Noor Sunday received the Chairman of the Board and Director General of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development Abdul Latif Al Hamad at Bab Al Salam. Hamad recalled his meeting with His Majesty the late King Hussein at Bab Al Salam last year, when the King overwhelmed him with his "kindness, human touches and gentle and humble demeanour." The Queen said that King Hussein "led with his heart, which directed every aspect of his world and life." Also attending the meeting was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf. Hamad said the fund will pursue its cooperation with Jordan by continuing to finance development projects in the Kingdom. Hamad also met Her Royal Highness Princess Basma and Hisham Khatib, member of the board of trustees of the Jordanian Hasbani Fund for Human Development.

IAEA official says world needs 'more quantitative nuclear assessment'

AMMAN (J.T.) — A visiting official of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) yesterday said the IAEA's experience in Iraq after the 1990-1991 Gulf war showed that the agency needs to move beyond its focus on nuclear material accountability to a system based on more quantitative assessments.

Mohammed Baradei, director General of the IAEA, said, "since 1991, and as a result of the agency's experience in Iraq, it has become clear that effective safeguards not only about the nuclear activities declared by a state, but also, in states with comprehensive 'safeguards' agreements, about the absence of any undeclared activities."

The situation in Iraq, which has since been declared by the IAEA as nuclear-weapons free, prompted the introduction by the IAEA of a strengthened safeguards system, the model protocol for which was approved by the IAEA

board of governors in 1997. Jordan has already concluded an additional protocol to its existing safeguards agreement.

The IAEA's safeguard system is a regime of some 70 documents of internationally binding agreements concerning comprehensive safety standards and measures that ensure physical protection, civil liability for nuclear damage, notification of emergencies, radiological assistance, the safety of nuclear power stations and the safety of waste and spent fuel management.

The strengthened safeguards system will "substantially raise the level of assurance" of the peaceful and safe use of nuclear material, Baradei said during a lecture at the Institute of Diplomacy. "But it must be recognised that, even with full implementation, nuclear material safeguards cannot provide 100 per cent guarantees.

"For this reason, [safeguards] must be supplemented by other mutually

reinforcing non-proliferation components," he said. "These include export control, and most importantly, regional and global security arrangements aiming to remove the incentives to acquire nuclear weapons. International cooperation in the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy should not be perceived as an intrusion on national sovereignty, but as a prerequisite for a state to exercise its sovereign right to use nuclear energy and technology."

Baradei, an Egyptian national, said that the IAEA has been engaged in ongoing consultations with states in the region on creating a nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) since 1992. At the "conceptual level," he said, a number of points have emerged.

"The first is that it would be desirable for agency safeguards to apply to all nuclear activities in the Middle East," he said. "And that the establishment of a NWFZ would be an impor-

tant step in enhancing security and creating confidence. Finally, [it is agreed] that a verification system for a NWFZ would most likely need to be comprehensive and intrusive to be able to deal with the legacy of conflict and distrust that exists in the region, and would most likely benefit from a system of mutual verification by the parties in addition to global verification by the IAEA."

But, he said, the reality is that differing opinions over what should come first — disarmament or comprehensive peace — and a four-year breakdown in the multilateral track of the peace process have ground to a halt any progress towards a NWFZ.

During his visit to Jordan, Baradei met His Majesty King Abdullah, His Royal Highness Prince Hassan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdul Ilah Khatib and Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Suleiman Abu Alin.

Illegal guest workers still outnumber registered guest workers

AMMAN (J.T.) — More than 150,000 guest workers have rectified their legal status and have acquired work permits from the concerned authorities, but many more are still working illegally in the country, according to the Ministry of Interior.

Ministry sources quoted by the Jordan News Agency (Petra) said Sunday that Jordanian courts recently imposed fines on some employers ranging from JD50-100 for employing non-Jordanians who do not have work permits.

The Ministry of Interior last year began implementing a series of measures to organise and control the local labour market. The sources said the measures were in line with the directives of His Majesty King Abdullah, articulated in his letter of designation to Prime Minister Abdul

Raouf Rawabdeh.

The King's letter said, "the government should act promptly and seriously in accordance with a clear plan to replace guest workers with local labour and should speed up the process of exporting the Jordanian labour force to brotherly countries."

The sources said ministry inspectors will continue to carry out search campaigns to ensure Jordanian labour law is respected and that employers and guest workers abide by its provisions.

The ministry has called on employers to ensure that their employees are either of Jordanian nationality or guest workers holding valid work permits. It has emphasised that Jordanian businesses should avoid hiring guest workers to fill positions that could be filled by Jordanians.

Meanwhile, the head of the

Department of Borders and Residency at the Public Security Department Brigadier Adnan Abdullat has emphasised that police will not be lenient in implementing the law.

In a statement to the press, Abdullat said since the start of 1999, his department has discovered that nearly 15,000 guest workers were employed in Amman without work permits and that 8,573 of them have now been deported from the country.

Abdullat said that the 59 offices recruiting domestic helpers to Jordan violate the law and aggravate the problem.

He said, according to the new regulations, each non-Jordanian worker should not only acquire a work permit, but also must report to the police about his or her place of work and residence.

Unofficial estimates put the number of non Jordanians working in the Kingdom at more than 800,000. Many believe their presence aggravates unemployment, officially estimated at 16 per cent and unofficially at 27 per cent of the total Jordanian workforce.

Abdullat said his department collected a sum of JD13.5 million in work permit fees over the past year. In the past two months it collected JD5.5 million.

Abdullat said his department estimates the rate of illegal workers at 85 per cent of the total number of non-Jordanians living in the Kingdom, noting that in general, non Jordanian workers are responsible of 6.5 per cent of the total number of crimes committed in the country.

Health ministry to launch TB awareness campaign

AMMAN (Petra) — The World Health Organisation (WHO) has classified Jordan as the country with the lowest rate of tuberculosis (TB) in the Middle East ahead of a Ministry of Health campaign against the disease on March 24.

The nationwide campaign will mark the international day to eradicate TB, said Khaled Abu Rumman, head of the ministry's TB department.

He said the WHO figures were released at a general conference on TB held in

Cairo late last year.

Abu Rumman said the ministry last year discovered 380 cases of TB in Jordan, of which 33 cases were found non-Jordanians working in the Kingdom. In the light of this figure, only eight TB cases exist in every 100,000 citizens in Jordan, the lowest rate in the Middle East, said Abu Rumman.

Last year, recalled Abu Rumman, the Ministry of Health set the year 2010 as the date for the complete eradication of TB from

Jordan. At the minimum, the Health Ministry hopes to lower the rate to one case for every 100,000 inhabitants.

According to the health official, the ministry's campaign against TB, launched a year ago, has been successful in reducing the number of cases reported and in curing 90 per cent of reported TB cases in the country.

Despite the discovery of a cure for TB over 40 years ago, said Abu Rumman, TB is still responsible for

the death of nearly three million people around the world every year.

He said the Health Ministry has prepared an integrated public awareness programme among the public and to take preventive measures against the disease. Abu Rumman said the programme, which mainly targets schools, includes lectures and media announcements cautioning the public about protecting themselves from the disease.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* "The Fan" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman on Tuesday March 9 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).

LECTURES

* "The Antiquities of Ghor Al Safi" by Khalil Hamdan at the Friends of Archaeology Centre at 6:30 p.m. (Telefax: 5930682).

* "The Arab Intellectual and the Inevitability of Globalisation" by Dr. Al Taher Labib of Tunisia at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.

Jordanian women look to brighter future on International Women's Day

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — As the world celebrates the International Women's Day today, Jordanian women's activists will mark this occasion by recalling His Majesty King Hussein's role in advancing women's role in the Kingdom, and hoping that the new government will carry on the message the late King opted to advance women's position in all aspects of Jordanian society.

"During the past 46 years of His Majesty King Hussein's rule, women's participation in public life flourished," said Amal Sabbagh, secretary general of the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW).

"In the past, women's work had been restricted to voluntary organisations, but during his reign, their participation in political life and other aspects such as Parliament and the Cabinet glowed during his era," Sabbagh said.

Sabbagh cited advancements education as another example of women's achievements.

"It used to be a rarity or an exception for women to be educated, but the rate of educated women has increased six fold, and is now really a norm. This opened the door for women's participation in so many other areas of society," she added.

"The women's movement has accomplished much during the era of His Majesty King Hussein in the political, social, legal and economic fields. All these achievements were made under the care and concern of King Hussein, and with the constant effort and follow-up of HRH Princess Basma," said Nawal Faouri, an Islamic Action Front

'We expect the new government to merge the letter of designation that touched upon women's issues with its plan of action to overcome the obstacles that hinders women's advancement without any delays'

— Faouri

member.

Princess Basma has been the figurehead of the women's movement in the Kingdom, she founded the Jordan National Commission for Women, a policy forum.

Still, she maintained, the women's cause and its full contribution to social development has still not found its natural place, because it has not grasped enough attention and care from the media and officials.

"The negligence of women's issues by local and official institutions remains an obstacle to the advancement of women and their achievement of their full rights," said Faouri.

In his letter of designation to Prime Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, His Majesty King Abdullah stated that the Cabinet should work hard to boost the role of women.

Activists say that this is the first time a letter of designation specifically calls for removing legislation that discriminates against women or that inflicts injustice on them.

"The role of women has developed through their participation in the country's economic, social, political and administrative life and this role needs the utmost care, especially in the Badia and rural areas," King Abdullah wrote to Rawabdeh.

"We expect the new government to merge the designation letter that touched upon women's issues with its plan of action to overcome the obstacles that hinders women's advancement without any delays," said Faouri.

Women activists have stressed over the years that many laws still discriminate against them, thus limiting their advancement

and full participation in social life.

They say that some of the most discriminatory legislation includes the Social Security Law, the Citizenship and Retirement Laws and several articles in the Jordanian Penal Code which allow reduced sentences for individuals who kill their female relatives on suspicion of involvement in "immoral relations."

On average, around 25 to 30 women are killed in Jordan annually for "honour-related" cases. Killers in such cases usually benefit from a reduction in penalty and end up receiving prison-terms ranging from three months to two years, depending on the case's circumstances.

Women say the law impinges on their very right to life.

Lately, honour crimes and the lenient penalties, drew strong criticism from the Royal family, led by the late King Hussein, Her Majesty Queen Noor and HRH Princess Basma.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women Regional Advisor Haifa Abu Ghazaleh noted that some legislation has been amended in favour of women, such as the insurance law.

In the past, children of working women were unable to claim their insurance benefits, although they were covered by their fathers' insurance plans. The law was amended several years ago in favour of women, Abu Ghazaleh told the Jordan Times.

Abu Ghazaleh added that one of the most important accomplishments for Jordanian women was the establishment of the Jordanian National Commission for Women, charged with main-

streaming gender issues in 20 sectors under the 1998-2002 socio-economic development plan, instead of relegating women to one of its chapters.

Abu Ghazaleh also pointed to an unprecedented regional campaign hosted during November and December 1998 under the theme "A Life Free of Violence: It is Our Right." The campaign was organised by UNIFEM.

"The campaign, with the help of the media and the effort of governmental and non-governmental organisations, was able to break the silence about violence inflicted on women in the region," she said.

One of the most important activities for the 16-day campaign in Jordan, was an essay and drawing competition for schoolstudents in the Kingdom, where the pupils used their brushes and pencil to reflect the forms of violence that women are subjected to.

"We hope, as we approach the 21st century, that the theme of the Forth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 'Action for Equality, Development and Peace,' will be achieved," Abu Ghazaleh said.

The National Project Officer at UNIFEM, Nisreen Alami said future plans for the fund include the establishment of a unit that supports institutions that provides small entrepreneurs with support services.

"We want these institutions to become more responsive to women's needs, and not to isolate women economically," Alami said.

Fourth woman killed in crime of honour

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — A 24-year-old woman was stabbed to death and nearly decapitated by her husband, official sources said Sunday.

The husband, Sufian M., turned himself in to police, claiming his wife, Izzihar Mahmoud, had behaved immorally.

"The suspect told the authorities that he suspected his wife of being involved in 'immoral relations' and that he killed her to cleanse his honour," said the source, who requested anonymity.

The same source told the Jordan Times that the victim filed a complaint to police that her husband had physically assaulted her only two weeks before her murder.

According to police surgeons, Izzihar received multiple stab wounds which penetrated the chest, reaching the heart, and a cut to the throat which almost decapitated her.

"We also found traces of burns to her hair, which indicates that the suspect was attempting to burn her after her death," Pathologist Mahmoud Shreideh of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine (NIFM) said.

Another source told the Jordan Times Saturday that the suspect's brothers, who resides in the same building, rushed to his apartment and prevented him from setting his wife ablaze.

The couple resided in Wihdat neighbourhood, east of Amman, in a building located on street number 30, and had been wed for four months.

In another incident on Saturday, a 31-year-old woman living in the Naour area filed a complaint to police against her husband for physical abuse, according to medical examiners.

The woman, identified only as T.A., a mother of five children, received more than 30 blows to her head and face by her 38-year-old husband, according to Pathologist Hani Jahshan.

"Our medical examinations indicated traces of strangulation and smothering as well as bruises to her face," pathologist Hani Jahshan of NIFM told the Jordan Times Saturday.

According to Jahshan, the authorities intend to prosecute the husband on charges of attempted murder.

Air force plane crashes near Delhi, 23 killed

NEW DELHI (AP) — An Indian air force transport plane crashed near a huge township and exploded in a ball of fire in a cluster of bricklayers' huts killing 23 people Sunday, officials said.

The Russian-built AN-32 aircraft suddenly veered off its landing path, clipped a brick boundary wall and vaulted into a massive drinking water reservoir, flattening dozens of brick huts of construction workers building the water storage tanks, eyewitnesses said.

The tanks are being built to supply drinking water to Papankalan, an upcoming township at the southern end of New Delhi with hundreds of thousands of houses built to ease the housing crunch in India's capital. Few people have moved into the township because civic amenities are not yet in place.

Six others were injured in the accident, which left the front half of the plane embedded in the water tank and its truncated tail end lying in a heap of blackened, twisted metal on the ground.

The 50-metre stretch over which the plane splintered at a massive speed after hitting the ground was littered with broken shards of metal and

debris of the poor labourers' huts.

The air force launched an inquiry into the accident and civil and military officials were unwilling to make immediate comment on the likely cause. Retired Air Marshall Denzil Keeler told Star Television the airport was suddenly enveloped in thick fog that reduced visibility to nearly zero, and the aircraft apparently undershot the runway.

Press Trust of India said the plane was cleared for landing at 8:12 a.m. (0242 GMT) when it suddenly disappeared from the radar screen, crashed and caught fire. Rescuers were searching for the flight data recorder.

"It was clear early in the morning, but later there was a thick wave of fog," said eyewitness Budhan Singh Kaitwar, 22, who escaped unhurt.

"Another plane was flying across the sky when this plane came from across, at a very low height, and slammed with a big sound into the huts," said Kaitwar. "Everybody was shouting, 'Run! Run!'" Several small houses with thatched roofs caught fire and were destroyed.

Chief Minister Sheila Dixit said 17 people on board the plane and six

civilians on the ground were confirmed dead. Dixit is the highest elected official of the state of New Delhi.

The plane was flying in from Gwalior in central India when it crashed about two kilometres from the airport. Press Trust reported. Airport authorities reportedly had declared the area unsafe for residences, but it was never evacuated, United News of India reported.

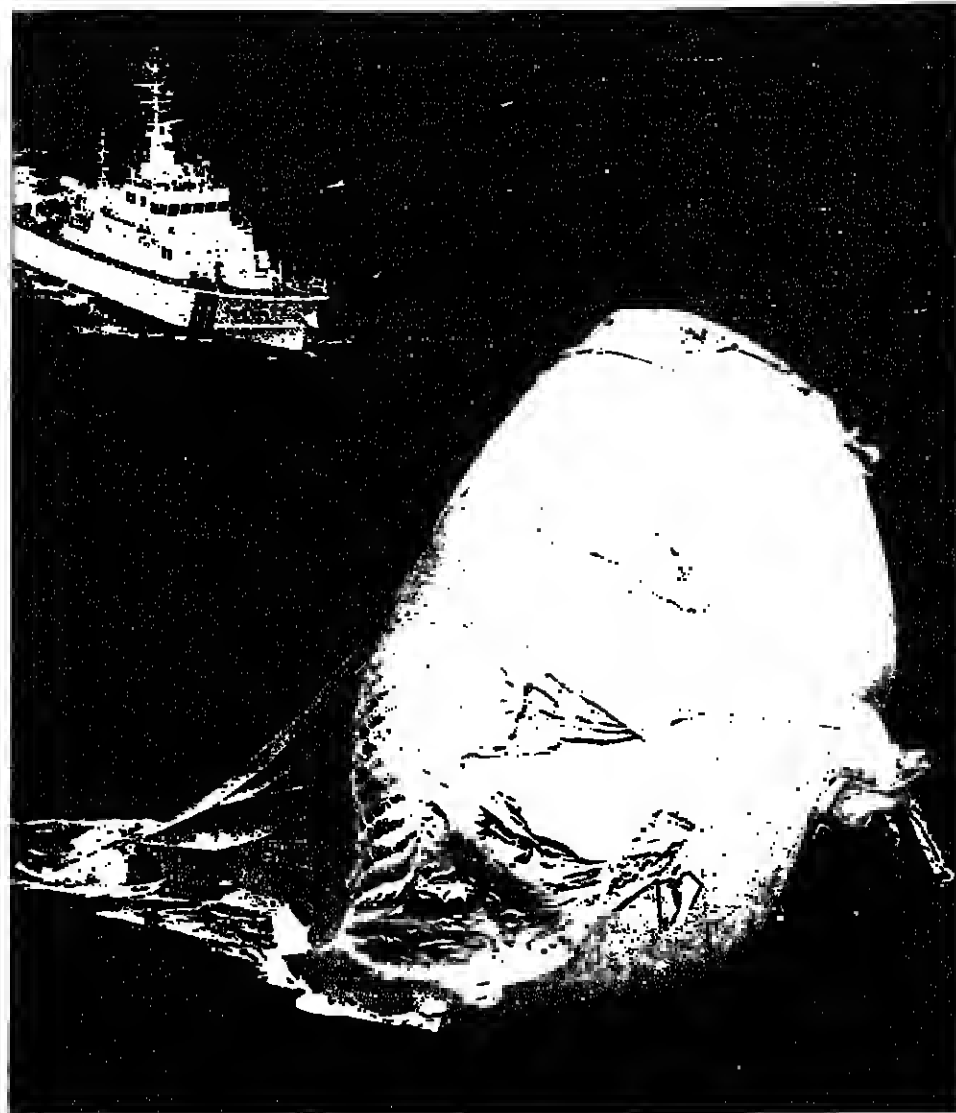
A woman who identified herself as Phulwani said two of her children were killed when a piece of burning metal hit her but.

Phulwani, cradling an infant, said she was working in a nearby area when the crash occurred.

"I had gone out of the house and when I came in, I found both my sons dead," she said, pointing to her hut where red blotches of dried blood were visible in a heap of charred bricks.

The airport, which handles international, domestic and military flights, was closed to all traffic.

It was the second air accident in three days in India. On Friday, an Air France cargo plane crash landed in the southern city of Madras. The plane was burned to a skeleton, but only one of the five-member crew was injured.



A British hot-air balloon, adrift on the sea off Omaezaki on the southwest coast of Japan, is approached by a Japan Maritime Safety Agency patrol boat after being forced to land during their round-the-world attempt. British balloonists Andy Elson and Colin Prescott were forced to abandon their record attempt due to bad weather (Reuters photo)

Balloonists say Chinese ban defeated them

LONDON (R) — Two British balloonists who Sunday were plucked from the sea by a Japanese military helicopter said they believed circling the globe north of the equator without China's cooperation was impossible.

Andy Elson and Colin Prescott were forced to abandon their round-the-world record attempt when bad weather forced them to ditch into the sea some 200 km southwest of Tokyo on the 18th day of their flight.

It was the latest of about 20 failed bids to break one of the world's last great aviation records.

"I don't think we have failed," Elson told a news conference in London via telephone from Hamamatsu, south of Tokyo.

"We have just found another way that doesn't work," he said. "We have learned a lot of lessons from this. Maybe one of the lessons is that without the cooperation of the Chinese, it is not possible to fly over the northern hemisphere."

The flight by 45-year-old Elson and Prescott, 48, who are both safe and well, was the longest ever in time by a hot-air balloon. They took off from southern Spain on Feb. 17.

But when the Chinese aviation authorities refused permission for any British-reg-

istered balloons to enter their airspace, they were forced to track to the south, slowing their progress and complicating their navigation.

The end came after cloud cover caused the solar batteries needed to operate the balloon's kerosene burners to run down.

Trying to get above the cloud, they picked up a lot of snow and ice on the outside of the balloon, forcing them to ditch.

Prescott praised as "amazing" the Japanese Self Defence Forces (SDF) who flew a helicopter through mist to the spot where the balloon ditched about 50 miles off the central Japan coast to pick up him and Elson after less than an hour in the water and take them to their Hamamatsu base.

A Swiss-registered balloon which took off from Switzerland Monday is now best-placed to claim the record, particularly because it has permission to fly over China.

Last December, British tycoon Richard Branson and his co-pilots — American Steve Fossett and Swede Per Lindstrand — were plucked from the sea off Hawaii after they aborted their round-the-world bid.

They had deviated from their prescribed course across China, causing

Beijing to implement the British balloon ban.

Flight director Ian Ashpole, speaking at the headquarters of flight sponsors Cable and Wireless Telecommunications, had no complaints about the Chinese attitude.

He said they had legitimate concerns about the possible danger to aircraft in their skies from an off-course balloon.

Ashpole said any attempt at a round-the-world flight in the southern hemisphere would be far more dangerous as much more of it would have to be over the sea.

The winds that blow from Japan across the Pacific Ocean to the Americas were the undoing of Elson and Prescott.

They had hoped to catch the northerly branch of the Pacific jetstream over Sapporo, on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, by Monday. That would have sped them across the ocean in about three to four days to the coast of Canada.

The two were rescued at 1.14 p.m. (0414 GMT) after directing their balloon down to the ocean, using emergency propane burners.

Elson, asked what he most wanted now, had little hesitation. "After more than 17 days, we need a shower," he said.

China warns U.S., Taiwan on missile defence plan

BEIJING (R) — China warned the United States Sunday against offering Taiwan protection under a missile defence umbrella, saying such a plan would harm the chances of a peaceful reunification with the island.

Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan's comments at a news conference were the most explicit public warning to date on the possible consequences of Washington deploying Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) over Taiwan.

"If some people intend to include Taiwan under Theatre Missile Defence, that would amount to an encroachment on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and also be an obstruction to the great cause of peaceful reunification of the motherland," Tang said.

The system, which has its roots in the "Star Wars" anti-ballistic missile research begun in the 1980s, is being studied jointly by the United States and Japan.

There have been calls to

Washington to include Taiwan under an umbrella which the U.S. government says is being considered because of a perceived missile threat from North Korea.

A Pentagon report last month said China had built up its missile force facing Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a rebel province which must be reunited with the mainland.

Beijing has refused to rule out an invasion should Taiwan declare independence. Taiwan agrees on the goal of reunification, but says Beijing must embrace democracy first.

Tang said the umbrella Washington was contemplating was a relic of cold war thinking and would disturb regional security.

"The development and research of TMD does not go with the trend of the times, nor is it conducive to international disarmament efforts," he said. "It will also exert a negative impact on the global and regional strategic balance and stability into the next century."

Tang also suggested it would violate Japan's constitutional pledge to maintain only defensive military capabilities, saying it would "go far beyond the legitimate defensive needs which the relevant country has repeatedly indicated" — a clear reference to Tokyo.

U.S. Secretary of States Madeleine Albright said in Beijing last week that China should stop worrying about "a decision that has not been made to deploy defensive technologies that do not yet exist" and instead do more for nuclear non-proliferation.

But a senior Chinese official who declined to be named told reporters Friday that the threat posed by North Korea was "greatly exaggerated."

He also responded to the Pentagon report on a Chinese missile buildup by saying it was none of Washington's business.

"Whether we should

NEWS IN BRIEF

China denies stealing U.S. nuclear secrets

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan denied Sunday a U.S. press report alleging China built and tested nuclear bombs using information stolen from a U.S. government laboratory. "This report is irresponsible and unfounded," Tang said during a press conference. "This demonstrates that there are always some people who want to obstruct the normal Sino-U.S. trade relations and the normal export of U.S. hi-tech products to China," he said. The New York Times reported Saturday that secret design information was stolen during the 1980s but was not uncovered until 1995. China's nuclear weapons designs began to show similarities to the U.S.' most advanced miniature warhead, the Times reported. By 1996, government investigators had identified an American scientist at a Los Alamos laboratory as their suspect. The Pentagon confirmed in January the FBI was actively investigating whether China obtained secret information for the most modern U.S. nuclear warhead, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said at the time the government had identified "security problems" at U.S. Department of Energy laboratories, which design and test U.S. nuclear weapons, in the mid-1980s but had since tightened security.

North Korea holds rare elections for local assemblies

SEOUL (AFP) — Communist North Korea held elections Sunday for assemblymen in provinces and cities to what official media called a "most democratic" way. The elections were the first since the North's rubber-stamp parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, confirmed Kim Jong-Il as supreme leader last September. "Elections ... are successfully going on with all the voters turning out in the elections with high revolutionary enthusiasm," the North's central election committee said through the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). As of midday, 87.98 per cent of the registered voters had participated in voting, it said. Balloting began simultaneously at all the constituencies to elect "deputies to provincial (municipal), city (district) and county people's assemblies," it said. North Korea touted Sunday's voting as "most democratic," saying its people "fully exercise their political freedom and rights under the best electoral system. All principles and procedures under the electoral system meet the demand and interests of the popular masses," KCNA said. "The country provides every condition to all the citizens so that they may be free in expressing their will in election."

Far-right Haider in running as Austrian provincial polls open

VIENNA (AFP) — Polling stations opened Sunday for an estimated 1.2 million Austrians to choose their representatives in regional parliaments in Tyrol and Salzburg in the west and Carinthia in the south. Jörg Haider's far-right nationalist Freedom Party (FPÖ) is expected to do well in Carinthia, which Haider governed between 1989 and 1991 before resigning over comments praising employment policies in Nazi Germany. The FPÖ has scored 38 per cent in polls. If it takes the Carinthian regional parliament Haider could be reelected as governor, with an eye on the chancellorship in the long-run. The elections are, however, unlikely to change the political scene in Tyrol and the Salzburg region.

Child soldiers in S. Leone handed over to UNICEF for counselling

FREETOWN (AFP) — Thirty-one child soldiers freed by Sierra Leonean rebels this weekend were handed over to UNICEF for counselling Sunday, officials from the U.N. children's agency said. The children, exhausted and starving, will also receive trauma treatment, the officials said. Most of the children were from eastern Freetown, ranging in age from five to 18 years. The youngest was a five-year-old girl. They were kidnapped by the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during its invasion of Freetown in early January, which unleashed more than two weeks of fighting in the capital and left up to 5,000 people dead. More than 2,000 children went missing during and after the attack, according to UNICEF. Nearly half that number were abducted by rebels, the agency has estimated. Childre kidnapped by the RUF have been used as soldiers, sex slaves, messengers and porters. Meanwhile, official radio reported Sunday that President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah held high-level talks with a three-man delegation from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Freetown at the weekend. The delegation, headed by OAU Assistant Secretary General Daniel Antonio, expressed its support for the government's decision to hold talks with the rebels. So far no date or venue for such peace talks has been announced. Monday, Kabbah is scheduled to hold talks in Lome with Togolese President Gnassingbe Eyadema, who is also the OAU chairman.

'Armed conflict displaces 27,647 families in Philippines'

MANILA (AFP) — Armed conflict in the Philippines has displaced an estimated 27,647 families in the first two months of the year, a senator said Sunday, as she appealed for the government to resume peace talks with Communist rebels. Citing a report by the Ecumenical Commission for Displaced Families and Communities, opposition Senator Loren Legarda said the January to Feb. 19 figure had surpassed the 20,470 families recorded as displaced in 1997. A full-scale war between the government and Communist National Democratic Front (NDF) could lead to the "dislocation of more families in the countryside" and worsen rural poverty, she warned in a statement. "We appeal to both the government and the NDF to return to the negotiating table at once in order to find a lasting solution to the insurgency problem. More and more families are being forced to leave their homes and abandon their sources of livelihood as a result of armed encounters, counter-insurgency operations, and harassment by paramilitary units," President Joseph Estrada has suspended peace negotiations with the Communist New People's Army after rebel units abducted Brigadier General Victor Obillo and his aide, Captain Eduardo Montelito in southern Davao city last month. Rebels also separately abducted last month a police Chief Inspector Roberto Bernal in eastern Philippines. Estrada has repeatedly ruled out negotiations for their release and the Communists have threatened of more tactical attacks.

India holds largest air-power display at nuclear site

POKHRAN, India (AFP) — India held its largest-ever air force exercise Sunday over this northern desert site where it conducted a series of nuclear tests last year.

Around 100 frontline fighter jets and bombers took part in the 90-minute manoeuvres at the Pokhran nuclear test site in the desert state of Rajasthan, around 200 kilometres from the border with arch-rival Pakistan.

The planes, which took off from three bases near the border, used mixed ordnance equivalent to 17,000 tonnes of high explosive.

The exercise, which included Russian and French-supplied MiG-29s, Sukhoi-30s and Mirage-2000s, involved seven different phases and included air-to-air combat, parachute drops and air-to-ground missile firing.

"There was nothing about this exercise to cause concern in Pakistan," said Defence Minister George Fernandes, who attended the display, together with air force chief Y.P. Tiwari.

"The exercise is connected to national security and showcases the strength and patriotism of the air force."

"But we felt the absence of an AWACS," the minister admitted.

A prototype Indian Airborne Warning and Command System (AWACS) plane crashed in January, seriously delaying plans for developing the country's own AWACS system.

The display of aerial power came four months after India conducted its largest war game in a decade near Pakistan's border, with tens of thousands of troops backed by armour, artillery and warplanes.

Pakistan has warned that Indian exercises pose a threat to peace at the heavily-militarised border between the two rivals.

The two countries almost

came to war in 1987 when India activated its largest military exercise, called "Operation Brasstacks," involving almost half a million troops.

India has one of the world's largest armies and the fourth largest air force with more than 1,200 combat and transport aircraft, although much of the fleet is outdated and poorly maintained.

While the exercise in Pokhran sought to showcase the air force talents, attention was diverted to the crash Sunday morning of one of the air force's aged, Soviet-made Antonov AN-32 transport planes near New Delhi airport.

More than 20 people, included all 18 passengers and crew were killed.

The Indian air force frequently loses pilots and warplanes in crashes, which it blames on a spare parts crunch and bird-hit menace.

Cambodian military court prepares case against Ta Mok

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Captured Khmer Rouge army chief Ta Mok remained under heavy guard Sunday while prosecutors prepared to file criminal charges against the guerrilla leader known as "the butcher."

Government spokesman Khieu Kanharith confirmed that Ta Mok would face trial in Cambodia, casting doubts on the government's willingness to see senior Khmer Rouge tried in an international court.

Ta Mok, arrested Saturday near Cambodia's northern border with Thailand, will at least be charged by military court prosecutors under legislation passed in 1994 that outlawed the Khmer Rouge, the spokesman said "he was arrested under the law outlawing the Khmer Rouge."

But please wait for the prosecutor's investigation. The charges could include everything," Khieu Kanharith said.

A top leader during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 rule of Cambodia, Ta Mok is considered to be at least partly responsible for the brutal conditions and mass executions that occurred when the radical Communists attempted to create an agrarian Utopia.

The guerrillas emptied cities and forced the population into crude farming collectives. As many as two million people — about one in five — died of starvation, disease, overwork or execution.

Warning that Cambodia's courts are woefully inadequate for the

task, United Nations legal experts have recommended the creation of an international tribunal to try senior Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes against humanity.

Although the Cambodian government has not ruled out an international trial, Prime Minister Hun Sen has responded coolly to the U.N. experts' recommendation, saying he favours the creation of a South Africa-style truth commission to investigate the brutalities of the regime.

Hun Sen has allowed the defection of several bloodstained Khmer Rouge leaders over the years in a strategy that led to the collapse of the guerrilla group. He has warned that an attempt to arrest these leaders could provoke ex-Khmer Rouge rank-and-file to renew their war against the government.

But the capture of Ta Mok — the last senior Khmer Rouge leader at large and the first to be arrested by the Cambodian government — could be the first domino to fall in wide-ranging legal proceedings against the Khmer Rouge, especially if he implicates his former comrades during the tribunal.

The United States, the staunchest supporter of an international tribunal, has welcomed the arrest of Ta Mok and promised to assist Cambodia's efforts to bring the Khmer Rouge chief to justice.

"We are encouraged that we now have the opportunity to bring one of the most notorious war criminals in recent past to justice, and we will now be focusing our

efforts on working with the Cambodian government to that end," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said in London, where Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is on a working visit.

Amnesty International representative Demetzel Stubbings said she hoped Ta Mok's arrest will be a catalyst for the speedy formation of an international tribunal but expressed fears that a local tribunal could have the opposite effect and derail international momentum.

"Efforts to hold people accountable for the gross human rights violations of the 1970s are welcome, but the interests of justice are best served by an international tribunal," Stubbings said.

U.N. experts have cautioned that Cambodians do not trust their own judicial system, which has been described by human rights groups as corrupt, unprofessional and stacked with loyalists of Hun Sen's ruling party.

The military court is best known for its trial and conviction of former co-Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh last year on charges of treason.

Ousted from power in Hun Sen's violent 1997 coup, Ranariddh was convicted in what was widely seen as a show trial to discredit the prince ahead of a national election. The prince was quickly pardoned by his father King Norodom Sihanouk and is now president of the national assembly, Cambodia's parliament.

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Russia pulls
representative
out of Che

H. Kong group
new justice s

6 killed, 200
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Russia pulls representatives out of Chechnya

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — The Russian government mission in Chechnya ordered its staff to withdraw from the breakaway republic because Russians cannot work under the present dangerous conditions, a news agency reported.

The order to leave the republic came two days after a top Kremlin official was kidnapped by a band of masked men who dragged him from an aeroplane as it was about to leave the Chechen capital, Grozny, for Moscow.

The chief of security at the Russian mission told the Interfax news agency, "under the present conditions, the staff officials are unable to perform their duties and are being recalled."

An intensive search by Chechen and Russian security services has failed to turn up any clues to the whereabouts of Maj. Gen. Gennadiy Shpigun, the interior ministry's representative in Chechnya, who was kidnapped Friday, officials said.

Valentin Vlasov, President Boris Yeltsin's personal envoy to Chechnya, told Interfax, "there has been no new information so far."

Russian officials based in the northern Caucasus region Sunday accused Chechen security forces of staging the abduction.

The kidnapping "had been thoroughly planned and carried out with participation of Chechen secret services," the ITAR-TASS news agency

quoted an unidentified Russian law enforcement officer as saying. Interior Minister Sergei Stepashin Saturday ordered Russian troops in the northern Caucasus on increased military alert following the kidnapping of Shpigun.

He was taken from a Moscow-bound TU-134 by five armed men who had boarded the plane at Grozny airport with false passports and tickets for the flight, news agencies reported.

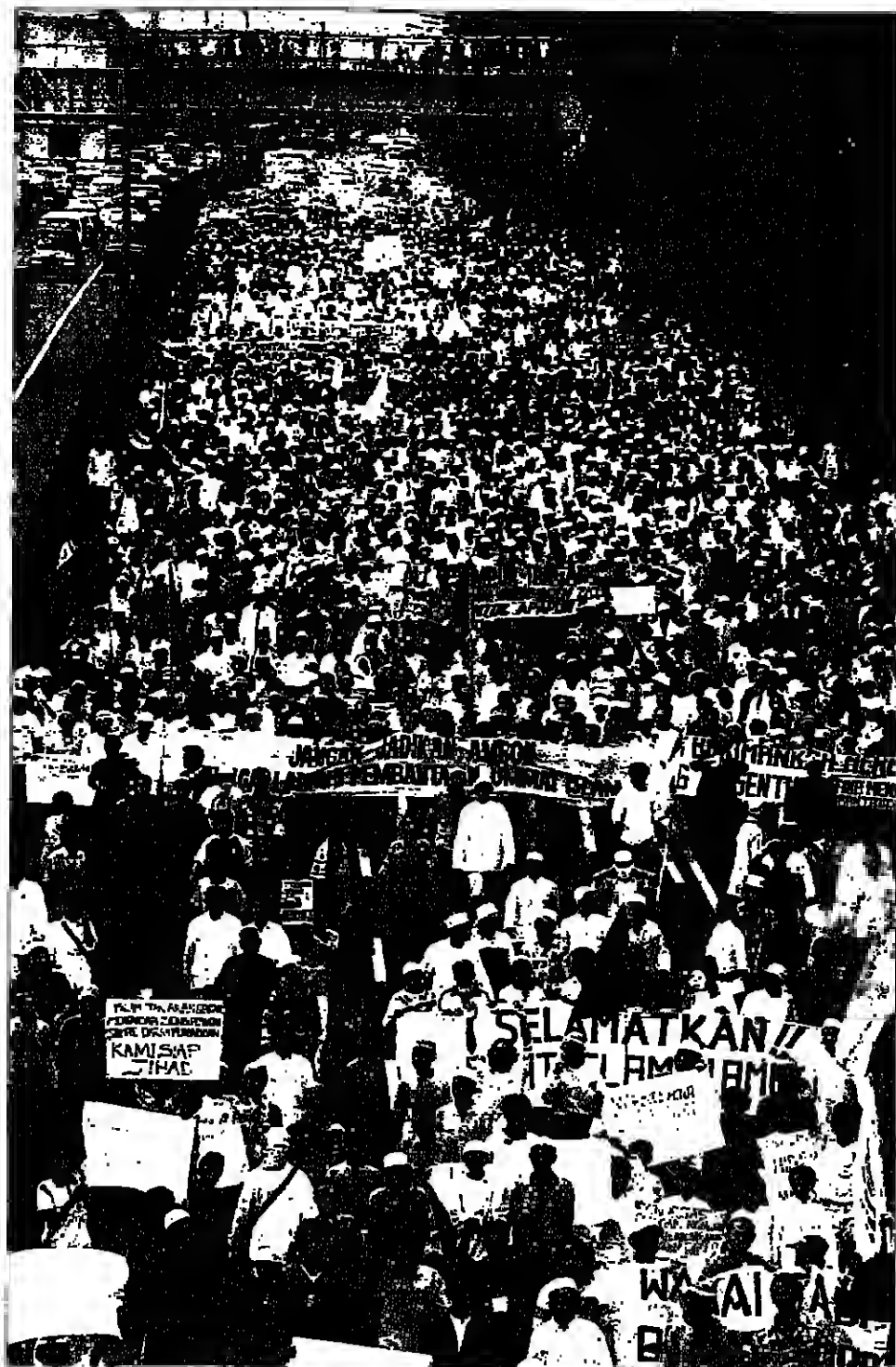
Danilbek Tarkayev, an advisor to Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov said on Chechen television Saturday that he believed that the kidnapping was carried out by the forces of renegade warlord Salman Raduyev, but offered no evidence.

Raisa Zhafarova, a spokeswoman for Raduyev's so-called "army," said Sunday the accusation was groundless, ITAR-TASS reported.

"It is the Russian secret services themselves which try to inflame the situation in the region by any means and are executors of the abduction," she said.

Kidnappings, mostly for ransom, have been widespread in and around Chechnya since the Chechens' 1994-96 war for independence from Moscow.

However, no one has claimed responsibility for Shpigun's kidnapping, and no demands have been made, ITAR-TASS said.



Thousands of Indonesian Muslims march through the streets of Jakarta to protest against the military's failure to end Christian-Muslim fighting in the far-eastern island of Ambon. More than 200 people have died in the past two months in communal violence in and around Ambon (Reuters photo)

Thousands of Muslims protest Ambon bloodshed

JAKARTA (R) — More than 100,000 Muslims marched through the streets of the Indonesian capital Sunday to protest against the military's failure to quell Christian-Muslim bloodshed that has killed more than 200.

Forming a column about two km long, they chanted "Allahu Akbar!" (Allah is great) and "Jihad! Jibad!" (holy war) as they walked 20 km from a smaller mosque to the historic Al Azhar Mosque in south Jakarta.

The protesters dispersed peacefully after reaching Al Azhar.

Security was low key, with only a few dozen police and troops.

There were no reports of trouble.

Sunday's rally was the largest in a series of Muslim

protests over communal fighting in the far eastern island of Ambon, about 2,300 km east of Jakarta. More than 200 people have been killed in Ambon and neighbouring islands in two months.

Some Muslim groups are calling for a holy war against Christians, who they accuse of running a vendetta against Muslims in the world's largest Muslim country.

Hundreds of Muslim youths have signed up for a plan to send Muslims to Ambon to help defend their brethren and mosques.

Friday, thousands of Muslims protested against the Ambon violence in two separate rallies in the capital.

Earlier Sunday, Indonesia's military sent a special team of senior offi-

cers to the battered island to help restore peace.

Armed forces (ABRI) chief General Wiranto said he had ordered the team to take tough action to halt the bloodshed, largely between Ambonese Christians and Muslims who have moved to Ambon from elsewhere in the vast archipelago.

ABRI has been unable to quell the violence, despite rushing thousands of extra troops to Ambon.

Indonesia has been racked by waves of violence over the past year as ethnic, religious and social tensions boil over, fuelled by rising poverty amid the worst economic and political crisis in three decades.

Analysts have warned that tensions are expected to rise in the run-up to the parliamentary election slated for June 7.

Ruling party says it will win only 40 per cent of vote at Indonesian elections

JAKARTA (AP) — The leader of Indonesia's ruling Golkar Party predicted Sunday that it would only be able to win 40 per cent of the vote at a general election slated for June 7.

However, Golkar chairman Akbar Tanjung told the Associated Press that this would be sufficient for it to maintain its position as the biggest party in Indonesia's parliament.

"Forty per cent is good enough," Akbar said after he addressed an estimated 100,000 cheering supporters at Jakarta's main sports stadium.

Most of the crowd were yellow, the party's traditional colour.

Buses, trucks and cars used by the supporters clogged streets surrounding the stadium.

Hundreds of riot police and troops were on hand. But there were no reports of trouble.

Violence has flared in several places around Indonesia in recent times as

the nation grapples with its worst economic crisis in 30 years along with rapid political change.

The June 7 election is expected to be the most democratic and open ballot to be held since 1955 and was called following last May's resignation of autocratic President Suharto amid riots and protests.

Under Suharto, Golkar dominated Indonesia's tightly-controlled political landscape and helped prop up his authoritarian regime, which is now accused of corruption and human rights abuses.

At the previous election in 1997, it won more than 70 per cent of the vote that was split among only three officially recognised parties.

Suharto's successor President B.J. Habibie has instituted wide-ranging democratic reforms. Under these, 48 parties have been permitted to contest the June 7 poll.

Many analysts say the big number of parties will mean

that the overall vote will be fractured and that a coalition government will have to be formed in the 500-member parliament.

Since taking over the reins of Golkar last year, Akbar, who is a close Habibie aide, has tried hard to sever the party's links with Suharto and to reinvent its image.

In his speech, Tanjung said the party would be more democratic and responsive to the people's needs.

"The new Golkar will work harder to fight for the people's aspirations and the development of human rights," he said.

After the poll is held, members of the parliament will join 500 government officials and appointees to form a special assembly that will select a new head of state before the end of the year.

Akbar said Habibie is one of several possible candidates who might be nominated by Golkar.

Bosnian Serb deputies to boycott state parliament

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia (R) — Hardline and moderate Bosnian Serb deputies said Sunday they would suspend their participation in the country's state parliament over a ruling not to award a disputed town to their Serb republic.

They announced their move as the Bosnian Serb parliament prepared to hold an emergency session to discuss the decision on the northern town of Brcko as well as the dismissal from office of the entity's hardline president by a Western peace envoy.

Bosnian Serb hardliners have reacted angrily to both moves, which were announced Friday.

Bosnian Serbs see the town on the border with Croatia as a lifeline linking the eastern and western parts of their territory and say the decision to remove it from their control in effect divides the Serb republic into two parts.

The town's fate was left unresolved in the Dayton peace agreement, which ended the 1992-95 war by dividing Bosnia into a Serb republic and a Muslim-Croat federation. It has until now been in Serb territory but under international supervision.

Western-leaning politicians also expressed deep disappointment over the decision by an international arbiter to turn the town of Brcko into a self-governing neutral district.

Mirko Banjac, a member of the ultra-nationalist Serb Democratic Party (SDS), told a news conference the 11 Serb deputies would "freeze" their status as parliamentarians pending further discussions by the Serb republic's parliament.

He and other deputies called for Serb unity.

Political turmoil intensified Saturday when the Serb chairman of Bosnia's collective presidency said he would suspend his participation in the top state body over the Brcko outcome.

Zivko Radisic, whose Socialist Party is a member of the Western-leaning Sloga coalition, said it posed a threat to both the Dayton agreement and to the Serb republic.

His move came after the Bosnian Serb Republic's moderate prime minister, Milorad Dodik, said Friday he would resign because of the decision on Brcko.

Moderate Serb leaders, who say they have worked hard to push the peace process forward despite hardline obstructionism,

feel the international community has let them down. "I think it is fair to say that there is not a single Serb politician who likes the Brcko decision," said one Western diplomat.

Thousands of hardliners held angry demonstrations against both Western moves in eastern Bosnia Saturday, burning and demolishing United Nations vehicles in the town of Zvornik.

Friday night, there were two bomb attacks against U.N. premises and vehicles in northwestern Bosnia, wounding a 12-year-old boy, the Bosnian Serb SRNA news agency said.

A local radical party politician who was shot dead by a soldier of the NATO-led peacekeeping force Friday evening was due to be buried in the town of Bijeljina Sunday.

The NATO Stabilisation Force (SFOR) said the U.S. soldier opened fire in self-defence after he was attacked. It said the situation was now calm throughout the Serb Republic.

Yugoslavia, patron of the Bosnian Serbs during the 1992-1995 war, also condemned the decision to turn the Sava River port of Brcko into a neutral district and called for it to be revised.

Estonian vote begins, centre coalition seen winner

TALLINN (R) — Estonians began voting Sunday in a general election expected to produce a centrist coalition which will lead the country to European Union membership and try to reignite a stalled economy.

Polls opened at 9 a.m. (0700 GMT) in windy, overcast weather, and close at 8 p.m. (1800 GMT). Turnout is expected to be around 70 per cent, about the same as in the last election in March 1995.

Opinion polls point to no clear winner and say Mart Siimann, the fifth prime minister in five years, has little chance of retaining office because his party has slipped below the five per cent level needed to gain seats in parliament.

The 865,000 eligible voters are faced with a dizzying field — 12 parties and 1,885 candidates, nearly 19 for each of the 101 parliamentary seats.

"I don't expect we will know a solution until late in the evening," Siimann told Reuters as he cast his ballot in the town of Kõstivere, some 20 km east of Tallinn.

Nearly a third of the electorate was still undecided in the closing days

of the campaign, and most analysts and politicians predict a centrist coalition will emerge, committed to joining the EU and NATO and to further economic reform.

Leading in the polls is the centre party of controversial former Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar on 17 per cent. But with a past mired in scandal and few friends outside the party, he is not expected to find enough support to lead a government.

Instead, three centre-right parties — Reform, the moderates and Pro Patria Union — that have said they will form an alliance after the vote are expected to be in a strong position to form a government.

Whoever does form the next cabinet will have to tackle the problems of a stalled economy and negotiate the Baltic nation's entry to the European Union.

"Whatever the results... we will stick to our two foreign policy priorities which are rapid accession to the EU and the Partnership for Peace with NATO, and there is very broad consensus among the political parties," President Lennart Meri

told journalists before the vote.

Estonia is one of post-Communist Europe's leading political and economic reformers, though the economy slowed sharply in 1998 under the weight of the Russian crisis.

Estonia's reward was its inclusion in a group of countries invited by the European Union late last year to begin detailed membership negotiations with the 15-nation bloc. The next administration will most likely lead the country into the EU.

The country has firm NATO aspirations too, but admittance to the Western military alliance has been bogged down in protests from Russia and a slowing in the pace of enlargement.

Meri said a new government must try to warm up relations with Moscow. Russian speakers, comprising about one fifth of Estonia's electorate, may get a chance to play king-makers in post-election coalition talks.

But if the Estonian United People's Party and the Russian party split the Russian speakers' votes between them, they may both be left out of the next parliament, analysts say.

Singapore opposition accuse prison authorities of unfair treatment

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Two Singapore opposition leaders just released from prison accused prison authorities of unfair treatment while serving their 12-day sentences.

Chee Soon Juan, secretary-general of the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), and assistant secretary-general Wong Hong Toy were convicted of holding an illegal rally in the city centre on Jan. 5 and were released Saturday.

Chee, 36, who was also jailed earlier last month on a similar charge, said he had only been allowed to meet with Wong and their counsel once, last Tuesday, during their stay in prison to discuss legal matters.

Wong, 62, said two days after the Tuesday meeting, he was called into a very cold room and questioned for half an hour on the meeting.

"I was very (unfairly) treated," Wong told reporters at a news briefing.

"I say that is torture. You can't have double punishment... the prison punishes me again and that is very unfair."

But he said a prison superintendent explained the cold room was "normal for everybody if they want to take a statement from them."

Chee said he was unsure why they took his colleague for questioning following the meeting with the counsel.

The two leaders met Sunday with a Malaysian delegation led by Tian Chua of the Coalition for

People's Democracy, which comprises representatives of 25 political parties and non-governmental organisations.

Tian Chua said the meeting was "very fruitful" and its purpose was to "express solidarity" with their counterparts in Singapore.

The SDP leaders Saturday vowed to step up their campaign for democratic reforms.

The conviction of Chee, who was fined 2,500 Singapore dollars, and Wong, fined 2,400 dollars, barred them from running for parliament for five years.

Under the constitution, any person fined 2,000 dollars or more, or imprisoned for a year or more is barred from polls for five years.

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Editorial and Advertising offices
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Facsimile: 5696183

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Moving to insure all

IT IS axiomatic that the right to life as called for by binding international human rights treaties cannot be enjoyed and protected without a full and comprehensive health insurance programme for all Jordanians. In more advanced countries, a two-tier system of health insurance, one for the rich and one for the poor, is increasingly rejected as discriminatory. Equal treatment of people, it is suggested, also means equal access to medical treatment. To have access to medical care and medicine is basic, and all Jordanians should be entitled to health care in an equal manner irrespective of their social or economic status.

Admittedly such a goal is too costly to apply in one giant step. State-run hospitals can ill afford to offer treatments to all citizens. That is why there will be a need for private medical institutions to complement governmental services just as there is a continuing need for private schools and universities to cope with the increasing number of students at all levels. But despite these realities and constraints, there can be no doubt in our minds that making medical insurance available to all Jordanians, especially those who can ill afford private hospitals or physicians, must remain our national ultimate objective.

The government is reluctant to pick up the tab for a comprehensive health insurance plan, considering its heavy budget deficit.

But it is also true that there are priorities in state expenditures, and some expenses are simply more urgent e.g., medical expenses for the poor. There should come a time when we need to emulate other countries with advanced systems of medical insurance. We can draw on the experiences of such countries as we proceed to perfect and extend our own system of comprehensive medical insurance system. Naturally, we have to wait till our country's economy is strengthened, but we should now formulate a clear vision for the future. Thus, His Majesty King Abdullah's call on the new government to start working on an operational, comprehensive, national health insurance scheme.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh said when a minister defends his policies and decisions by claiming that they are pursued in line with Royal directives, it means that the official does not want to take responsibility. When a government wants the King to support a certain decision in order to help implement it, it means that the government wants to be ruled by the King, although the Constitution stipulates that the King practises his authority through his ministers, added Faneh. Taking decisions and drawing policies might be right or wrong. Mistakes can be corrected, but if some parties make "deadly" errors, they must leave and give a chance to others who might help save the situation, said the writer. Thus, in accordance with the Constitution, he added, a government must be held accountable when it makes mistakes. Although the Letter of Designation listed 20 points about the country's policies and directives, it does not minimise the responsibilities of the government, which accepted the designation and committed itself before the King and public opinion, said Faneh. The government's success or failure depends on how it implements the Letter of Designation's objectives, he stated.

Al Dustour's Orib Rintawi analysed the tendencies of Prime Minister Abdul Ra'uf Rawabdeh and Chief of the Royal Court Abdul Karim Kabariti. Both are known for strong points of view and perhaps represent two schools in Jordan's political life, said Rintawi. Choosing the two has different policy "colours". Rawabdeh, for example, is a "graduate" from the Parliamentary school, recently one of the pioneers of political parties and has experience with different political powers and in public activities, added Rintawi. Rawabdeh's new position will enable him to responsibly continue national dialogue, especially that he is aware of the "minute" details of internal files, said the writer. Kabariti is the man who is connected to the "white revolution", a supporter of the media and freedom of expression, a man of democracy. His regional position enables him to represent a widerange in society. Rawabdeh is expected to leave his fingerprints on policies and administration, while Kabariti came to power and filled an era with his ideas, according to Rintawi. Although it still too early to speculate how things will be managed in the coming stage, it seems that the Kingdom's policy will see positive changes, said Rintawi.

Water and the Arabs

Economic Review



Dr. Yusuf Mansur

One thing is certain, however. Arab countries have to cooperate in the area of water desalination to try to improve on the process to make it cost effective and to come up with methods that would make desalination nationally viable. (Almost 60 per cent

MORE AND more the scarcity of water is becoming a pressing problem for all the Arab countries. The challenge it poses grows stronger every year. It is expected that the average for the region will reach 667 cubic metres per person in the year 2025 — one seventh of the global average. But we do not have to wait for 2025, currently of the eighteen countries of the region, only seven have over 1000 cubic metres of water per person per year.

Renewable water resources in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region total 350 million cubic ton or 1436 cubic meter per person and come from a limited variety of sources. Thirty-five per cent of renewable water resources come from rivers that lie outside the region and are

hard to manage or control as water levels fluctuate sporadically. Many of the countries (Algeria, Saudi Arabia, The Arabian Gulf, Jordan, and Yemen) depend on ground water. However, this is expected to run out in a few years. As for the demand for water, over 80 per cent of water goes to the agriculture sector, even though the basic water demand of the citizenry in many of the countries of the MENA will be difficult to meet by the year 2025.

Moreover, there are many regional problems involving water sharing and distribution with many imbalances that have been at the heart of several regional conflicts. For example, while the areas under the control of the PNA consume only 200,000 cubic metres per annum,

Israel consumes 1.6 million cubic metres per year and behaves as if there is no water shortage in the area — 70 per cent of its water is wasted on agriculture, which represents less than 1 per cent of its GDP.

There are many issues that need to be addressed by the Arab countries and there are important questions that should have been answered already. Will the water shortage become a problem of the past? Or will the lack of water become the problem of the future? Will regional problems be settled through planning and research or through wars and conflict? History, as the region has proven, often repeats itself. And questions whose solutions are not attempted now will still have to be answered in the future.

of all water desalination is conducted in the region, particularly in the Gulf.) If need be, maybe Arabs should emulate the aggressive drive of Israel to become the major source of inexpensive desalinated water in the region. The Israeli water commissioner recently stated that Israel has plans to set up water desalination plants by the year 2008 with an estimated production capacity of 100 million cubic metres per year.

Desalination will be the only viable option in the near future. It is also the most expensive option. Therefore, Arab countries must unite their efforts to either lower the cost or increase the income of their citizenry so they can afford the water. Both options require planning, effort and time.



It's dead wrong

By Simon Jenkins

THIS WEEK, a group of non-Europeans killed a group of Britons in a most brutal fashion. The story is still being given sensational coverage in the British media.

Meanwhile, a group of Britons have been killing non-Europeans in a most brutal fashion. That story has been ignored.

The killing of four Britons in Uganda, allegedly because of Britain's support for the Tutsi regime in Rwanda, was ghastly and tragic. Travellers to turbulent parts of the world take a risk. British visitors have been killed in Yemen, in Chechnya and in South-East Asia. None received two, three, four pages of gruesome coverage, day after day, Rwanda and its borderland is the site of Africa's Cambodia, a blood-bath not yet over. The genocide is ignored by British and American interventionists largely because blacks are killing blacks, and doing so far from cameras and aircraft carriers.

It is hard not to conclude that the attention given to this tragedy was because blacks killed whites, and with gruesome weapons, thus conforming to the stereotype of "barbaric" Africa.

Now for the "unimportant" killing. Britain is currently conducting a bombing campaign against Iraq in support of the War of Clinton's Frustration. In December, British and American forces unleashed a rain of terror on Baghdad with the macho title of Desert Fox. This was a 72-hour burst of bombs and missiles, whose objectives were obscure. They were variously to "teach Saddam a lesson", to "dissuade him from the air", to restore weapons inspections and possibly to yield a coup. Afterwards, Tony Blair boasted "we have put Saddam back firmly in his cage and secured it." Washington agreed. Its justification for Desert Fox was to achieve what United Nations inspectors had failed to achieve: to neutralise President Saddam Hussein's offensive weapons. This had been done.

In which case what was the point of continuing with sanctions after December? The answer is that there was a wider war aim. Within weeks, the bombing resumed. In the past two months, more bombs have fallen on Iraq than during Desert Fox. A wider list of targets has included vaguely defined "command and control" sites. Even assuming a pilot knows what he is aiming at, he cannot be sure of hitting it. The Pentagon recently confirmed that only half of Desert Fox's 34 air defence targets were hit.

The UN, staff in Baghdad are now auditing civilian casualties from some 80 recent Anglo-American raids. In the past two months, they confirmed 17 dead, including a woman and five children, in a housing estate in Basra, an outrage that would have stunned the British media had it been an Iraqi bomb in a British housing estate. They have confirmed five women and five children killed in Abu Khasib, six civilians killed in Najaf, and five civilians

killed in "southern Iraq" on February 15. There have been confirmations that hundreds more have been maimed and wounded and thousands driven from their homes.

The means of their death is no less "barbaric" than was used in Uganda. Blast and fragmentation weapons are designed to attack the body with shrapnel pellets, like hundreds of stab wounds. They turn buildings either into infernos or into concrete missiles or into live-burial tombs. The deaths may not look ghastly from a pilot's cockpit, or from a targeting computer, or on the follow-up video, or even from Downing Street. But these weapons are the cruellest harbingers of death. The endgame of the most sophisticated technology is not a clean bullet in the head, but a medieval killing, the mutilating, shattering and crushing of the human body. Of course ministers will say that civilian casualties are mistakes. I am sure some Hutu commander regards the killing of British tourists in Uganda as a mistake. His gangsters were out for Tutsis and hit the wrong camp, like a Tomahawk gone haywire. But British ministers are not crazed Hutus. They are acting within rules of engagement that should pass muster in a civilised democracy. At present, they do not pass muster. This war has not even been put before the House of Commons. The reason is that it cannot be defended there, even before a Commons which these days has all the independence of a Baghdad military parade.

This week the poor Defence Secretary, George Robertson, was pushed forward to parrot the old Vietnam War phrases. The targets, he explained, were being "degraded" by British pilots "in self-defence" while flying "humanitarian missions" intended "to protect the Iraqi people." I had a flashback to General Westmoreland in Saigon, explaining why you must bomb a village to save it. Meanwhile, Robertson and his friends this week bombed the Iraq-Turkey oil pipeline at Ceyhan, the conduit for oil-for-food that is the one shred of humanitarianism left in this affair. We let Iraq sell oil for children's food, then bomb the oil. To hell with the ethics.

This is lunacy. I am no pacifist. In my time I have visited some horrific, and justified, wars. But this campaign is indefensible. The "official" objective is quite different from December's Desert Fox, which was to punish the Iraqi President and destroy his chemical and biological weapons. This campaign is allegedly to protect the "no-fly" zones in the north and south of the country. But Saddam is not threatening them. He is merely using his, supposedly degraded, airforce to "cheat and retreat": to entice the British and American planes into bombing attacks that he hopes will win him Arab and Eastern bloc support. His tactic appears to be working.

We are now told privately that the real reason for the war is different again. It is

'We let Iraq sell oil for children's food, then bomb the oil. To hell with the ethics. This is lunacy'

to go on pounding Iraq with bombs, any old where, until they do what bombers have never done before: bring about the downfall of a regime. This reason cannot be declared because it is illegal. For better or worse, overthrowing the leader of a sovereign state by force runs counter to both the UN Charter and international law. So what we have here is, in reality, a private war against Iraq that neither London nor Washington can avow. The nearest parallels are the operations by Presidents Nixon and Reagan against hostile governments in Chile, Nicaragua, Lebanon and Panama. Mostly they used mercenaries. Britain is using the RAF.

In which case, cries a modern Palmerston, at least let it work. But how? This is a war without any plan, any tactic, any strategy or any foreseeable victory. It is mere bombing.

Toppling Saddam Hussein would plainly require a ground assault. Britain has neither the will nor the guts for that. If Anglo-American forces invaded, against the opposition of half the world, they would have to fight and to stay. As in Bosnia and presumably in Kosovo, they would have to take responsibility for the aftermath. They would need to be proper policemen, rather than the present hit-and-run vendetta squad.

The British government lacks the courage of its convictions in this venture. It is pursuing low-cost, low-risk machismo.

It is doing something relatively easy, but obscenely cruel, to avoid having to do something hard but sensible. This would be to admit that a decade of anti-Saddam strategy has failed and sanctions should end. Bombing and sanctions have merely entrenched him, and worsened the impoverishment of his people. British ministers keep saying they have no quarrel with the Iraqi people, only with Saddam. Not so.

There are two quarrels. One is with Saddam, which he is winning. The other is with the Iraqi people, which they are losing. They are the ones Britain is bombing.

The present British Cabinet and Parliamentary Labour Party are largely composed of one-time anti-war protesters. A general once told me that whenever he saw ban-the-bombers on the march his instinct was to run for cover. He was right.

But I never thought the marchers would end up dropping the bombs.

— The Times

Letters to the editor

Unlimited Internet access — if you can spare an hour

I AM writing this letter after spending yet another hour today trying to log on to the Internet in a failed attempt to retrieve my e-mail. I am sure that many of your readers have similar experiences when trying to get on the information super-highway via the "country lanes" provided by our local Internet providers. Despite the fact that those companies are providing a poor service to their trapped customers, who signed (stupidly) long contracts with the promise of "unlimited" access, they are sparing no effort in advertising for more clients to join the queues for their "unlimited" services. I guess, for their accountants, it makes perfect financial sense — get more clients and let them join the queue — and once they sign and pay and get an e-mail address it's very difficult to go somewhere else.

I sincerely think that there should be a regulatory body, even, may I dare to suggest, with some government involvement, to regulate such businesses to make sure that those companies are providing an adequate service to their clients. Especially in this day and age where the Internet has become an integral part of one's life.

Now, I have to go back and try to retrieve my e-mail,

Amjad Tadros
atadros@trapped.com.jo
(Or, more reliably, PO Box 5047)
Amman

The Kosovo bias

I HAVE been reading with great interest the editor's choice articles on Albanian terrorist activities in Yugoslavia, which are written on a weekly basis in a very biased way.

I am not writing as a nationalist, because I was born in a part of Yugoslavia where nationalism is unknown — Vojvodina where around 20 national groups live together for centuries. My ancestors are of Serb, German and Hungarian origins, and I lived happily all my life listening to strange languages. My opinion is that the editor never read the history of the Balkans.

After World War II, Albania established a very harsh communist rule under dictator Enver Hoxha, who ruled for 40 years. During this period, the exodus of Albanian people took place. They all found a safe haven in Yugoslavia across the border, and were welcomed in the Kosovo region. Under Tito's rule they established schools, universities, radio and TV stations, publishing etc. in their own language, which they still have. Now they want to have their own government? Actually they have their own state in Albania, and are more fortunate than the Kurdish people in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria who number 20 million! Also, Albanians are 1/3 Catholics (like Mother Teresa) so there is no religious war.

The Kosovo region is a centuries old Serb centre full of old monasteries and churches built by old Southern Slavs. I recommend editors to visit the region, to see for themselves how many Albanian families have lost members because of Albanian terrorists; families who don't want to separate from the Belgrade government. You also forget that the Yugoslav government signed every point of the Rambouillet agreement in France, unlike the Albanians, and the talks failed because of that.

Why should Yugoslavia allow NATO troops on its soil? Would you?

Julijana Vluri
PO Box 925602
Amman

Letter of condolence

I HAVE long admired and respected King Hussein and was profoundly sad to learn of His Majesty's death.

Brian Danner
U.S.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Features

Umm Qais plateau survey documents strategic area's ancient uses

VISITORS AND scholars have long enjoyed the antiquities of Umm Qais (Roman Gadara), but the ancient city's vast highland plateau to the west has been out of bounds to scholars and tourists because of the area's military designation since the middle of this century. This situation has changed since the Jordan-Israel peace agreement of 1994 made the plateau more easily accessible, as some of the army installations were moved elsewhere. In late 1998, a German-led team of archaeologists started an intensive survey of the Umm Qais plateau, and their initial five-week season has identified ancient roads and quarries, Roman period milestones, fortified farmsteads, a significant Early Bronze Age IV cemetery, and impressive wine presses suggesting industrial scale wine-making in the Roman-Byzantine period.

The survey project is directed by Nadine Riedl, assistant director of the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology Amman office, who has conducted this work on behalf of the German Archaeological Institute (Berlin, Germany).

The team launched the survey in October 1998 with several primary goals in mind: to determine the plateau's pre-Hellenistic history (very little earlier than the Hellenistic era has been found inside Umm Qais itself), to study more intensively the history of land use in the chora (or city territory) of Gadara, and to better understand the relationship between the city and its hinterland.

The survey area comprises the Ard al-'Ala, a triangular plateau measuring some six square kilometres, located immediately west of the ancient and modern towns; the plateau overlooks the Jordan Valley to the west and the Yarmouk River Valley to the north. The plateau previously had been only briefly examined and reported on in works published by the German scholars G. Schumacher (1890) and Siegfried Mittmann (1970). It clearly deserved further examination, Riedl said in a recent interview at Umm Qais, "because the plateau was of major importance in antiquity due to its favourable climatic and topographical conditions and its strategic location." Textual evidence also indicated the area was widely used in ancient times.

The Roman era writer Josephus, for example, mentioned that the area surrounding Gadara contained villas, farmsteads and villages. So it was likely that a survey of the plateau would identify ancient remains — despite the major damage to



One of the several wine presses documented in the Umm Qais plateau survey (photo by Rami G. Khouri)

ancient structures done by modern agricultural activities.

Aiming to cover the area as thoroughly as possible, the eight-member survey team designated sample squares within existing agricultural fields, which were easy to locate on aerial photographs. They walked the entire area on foot, intensively surveyed randomly chosen fields, and collected surface pottery from 37 of the total of 116 fields. Architectural, quarrying, and other ancient remains on the surface were documented: farmers and residents in the area were also questioned for information about antiquity sites that may no longer exist, due to damage by agricultural construction, and other activities in recent decades.

The preliminary results of the 1998 season identified two narrow roads along the northern and southern edges of the plateau, both built of basalt stones.

Despite the presence of an adjacent Roman milestone, the southern road proved to be modern, probably from the British Mandate period, though it clearly re-used the path of an ancient road. A group of milestones was discovered alongside the northern road, about one Roman mile from the city, now incongruously located in the middle of agricultural fields. One of the

inscriptions on the milestones indicates that the road was constructed (or probably repaired) during the reign of Caracalla (211-217 AD). Only a few building remains were identified, probably for two reasons: the agricultural nature of the area probably precluded many built structures on good arable land, and, most of the ancient structures' stones have been cleared from the cultivated fields in recent centuries.

One preserved structure is a large square tower overlooking the Wadi al-'Arab, which passes south of Gadara and the plateau. The structure probably dates from the Hellenistic period, Riedl explained, adding that "it possibly served as an outpost to secure the hinterland of Seleucid Gadara" during the 2nd century BC.

Another such building was similarly situated in a commanding position along the north rim of the plateau, overlooking the Yarmouk River Valley and the acropolis of Gadara. This second building may have been a fortified farmstead, of a type that was common in the region in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Riedl said. A field tower located on a low hill about three kilometres from Gadara seems to have been used exclusively for agricultural purposes.

Among the most exciting finds of the season were two large wine presses, located

along the northern side of the plateau, near the ancient road and city.

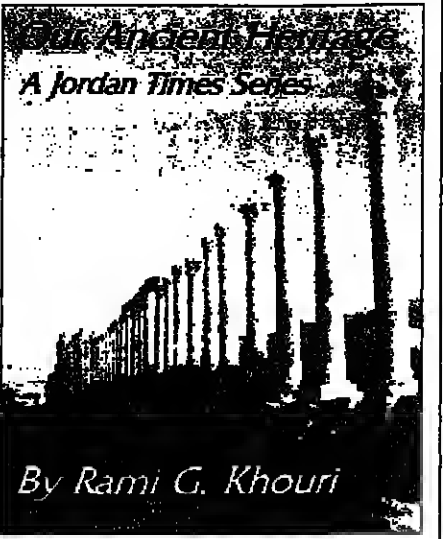
One press was built by partly re-using elements of a former Roman cemetery: graves were transformed into liquid collecting basins, and one tomb chamber was transformed into a store room. That wine press has been dated to the Late Roman or, more likely, to the Byzantine period. The basalt that was used for many buildings was quarried on the plateau itself, and traces of such basalt quarrying were found at several different places along the southern edge of the plateau. One large basalt quarry was identified on the western slope of the plateau, about three kilometres west of the city. Surface pottery collected there indicates the quarry was in use during the Roman and Byzantine periods.

The only pre-Hellenistic remains found on the plateau was an Early Bronze Age IV cemetery on the western slopes, comprising over one hundred shaft tombs.

Each tomb had a single chamber cut into the soft limestone bedrock. About 300 metres away the team documented the site of Khirbet et-Tabaq, with standing basalt walls from a Mamluke or early Ottoman settlement. The pottery indicates the presence of an earlier settlement from the Hellenistic period, which can only be verified by excavations in future. Some pottery shards at Khirbet et-Tabaq are very similar to the pottery from the nearby Early Bronze Age cemetery, suggesting that the two sites were somehow related in antiquity.

The survey team will continue its fieldwork next year, focusing on the western slopes leading down from the plateau to the northern Jordan Valley. The project has been financed by the German Archaeological Institute, Berlin (DAI), with logistical support from the German Protestant Institute Amman office (DEI). Mem-

bers of the survey team with Ms Riedl were Katrin Bastert-Lamprichs, Claudia Bührig, Thorsten Bunk, Christian Harl-Reiter, Nasser Hindawi, Elke Posselt, Isabelle Ruben, and Department of Antiquities representative Ruba Abu-Dalu.



Nadine Riedl inspects an inscribed Roman milestone alongside the northern ancient road on the Umm Qais plateau (photo by Rami G. Khouri)

Breaking the culture of silence on violence against women

Statement by the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

AS WE celebrate the International Women's Day at the end of the 20th century we can take pride in the very remarkable progress that has been made to promote the advancement of women in many areas of their lives, including their reproductive health. At the dawn of this century, women had to fight in the streets to be allowed to vote or to use contraception. Women in positions of power and decision-making were a rarity, and many educational institutions kept their doors firmly shut to women and girls. Today, however, all of these barriers have been broken, largely due to women's own determination, singly and collectively. All over the world, women are taking their rightful place in the world, contributing to wealth creation in the economy, staking their claim in the world of diplomacy and politics, and raising their voices at the community level. They are being heard and they are making difference that is improving the quality of the lives of their families, communities and nations.

Yet women's lives and potential continue to be endangered by violence which is directed at them simply because they are women. The biological function that ensures that societies survive, thrive and reproduce is the very same that makes women the targets of violence. It is time that every one of us, individually and collectively, took a stand to eradicate violence against women in all its manifestations. We must break the culture of silence on violence against women. We must promote zero tolerance of violence against women everywhere.

Violence against women knows no class, race, or age. It exists across all socio-economic groups, and it is a daily phenomenon in the lives of women throughout the world and throughout their life cycle. Even before they are born, girls suffer from the consequences of a widely prevalent sociocultural

disposition that favours boys over girls. In some countries, a strong preference for boys leads to the killing of girl children and selective abortion of female foetuses. Where resources are scarce, boys are often more likely to receive enough food, education or adequate medical care, which logically leads to poorer health in girls, and even to higher mortality rates on their part.

However, violence is not limited to women's early years in life. Adolescent girls are at high risk of physical and sexual abuse, and due to their powerless positions in society, they are in no position to protect themselves. Female genital mutilation, which is mostly practised on young girls, has devastating effects on their reproductive and sexual health, as well as on their psychological well-being. Research studies are now beginning to document that in some instances, 40 to 60 per cent of a girls' first sexual contact is through coercion. A high proportion of pregnancies among adolescents is a consequence of coerced sexual contact. All over the world, adolescents are also the most likely to resort to unsafe abortion and to suffer maternal mortality and morbidity as a result. Today, we are also witnessing a significantly higher HIV/AIDS infection rate among girls than among boys in the 15-24 age group. The reproductive and sexual health of these young women is at stake, and action needs to be taken to safeguard it.

The most endemic form of violence against women is domestic violence. The family, often thought to be a safe haven of love and support for girls and women, is now increasingly a locus of violence. Women and girls are actually at the greatest risk of violence from members of their households, than from strangers. This reality must be understood and addressed. The present deterioration of many economies and situations of insta-

bility and war, have increased women's vulnerability, especially regarding their reproductive and sexual health. Older women, especially widows, are particularly vulnerable because of their economic dependence on male relatives.

Many forms of communally sanctioned violence against women, such as female genital mutilation or "honour" killings, are associated with the community's or the family's demand for sexual chastity and virginity. Perpetrators of such violent acts often receive light sentences or are excused because the defence of family honour is treated as a mitigating circumstance. Such attitudes must be eradicated and the violation of women's reproductive rights thwarted. Women's and girls' reproductive and sexual health should not depend on the perceptions and feelings of those wielding authority over them, be they the state, the church, the community or the family, but must be guaranteed as a basic human right.

Most of all, we must ensure that the voices of women who are victims of violence are heard. They must be supported to speak out. They need to be supported to overcome the physical, emotional and psychological trauma that they live through. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is a strong partner of governments, the civil society, including NGOs, the private sector and all individuals who have committed themselves to eradicate violence against women. Through all of our programmes in reproductive health, population and development strategies, and in advocacy, we have made it our concern to play our part to ensure that future generations will live in a world free of gender-based violence. We invite each one of you to renew your commitments, and to let us all join hands to make the world a better place in the new Millennium.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's message on International Women's day

Despite progress, dedication is still needed to eradicate gender discrimination

TODAY, we celebrate the last International Women's Day of the 20th century. It gives us an occasion to take stock of the progress made in the struggle for equal rights for women and for women's full participation in the development process. It presents us with an obligation to face the road we have yet to travel.

We can look with some pride at the remarkable achievements made so far. We entered a century where women had the right to vote in a mere handful of countries; we leave one where the vast majority of countries have universal suffrage. We entered a century where women were practically excluded from decision-making; we leave one where the participation of women at senior levels of leadership, national and international, is no longer questioned.

In many countries, provisions guaranteeing the enjoyment of human rights without discrimination on the basis of sex have been included in Constitutions or integrated into legislative reforms. Discriminatory legal provisions have been repealed and legal literacy and other measures introduced to alert women to their rights and ensure their access to those rights. The world community has identified violence against women in its various forms as a clear violation of women's rights. Strong actions have been put in place, at the international, regional and national levels, to confront what should always have been considered unconscionable.

Yet much remains to be done. As we stand on the threshold of the new Millennium, we are confronted by challenges both new and old. At the forefront is the impact on

'On this last International Women's Day [this century]... Let us enter the new Millennium with the prospect of gender equality in sight for women everywhere'

women of globalisation, liberalisation, economic restructuring and privatisation. Poverty among women — especially heads of households and older women — appears to be deepening. Women are over-represented among the unemployed and underemployed. If employed, they are more likely than men to be found in poorly paid, part-time employment or temporary and insecure jobs.

Women continue to pay with their lives for inadequate provision of health care. Preventable diseases and unequal access to health care still affect women and girls, especially those in the rural sector. To our shame, maternal and infant mortality remain high in several countries, both as a result of inadequate ante-natal and maternity care, and of limitations in family planning programmes. HIV infec-

tion among women continues to increase, and countries still lack programmes targeted to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment among women and girls.

Next year, five years will have passed since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action — the world's first truly comprehensive plan in the areas of critical concern to women's advancement. Let us recommit ourselves to its full implementation. The ideal of gender equality, to which we have so long aspired, is still far from a reality. High on our agenda must be the completion of the structure of international legal protection. I urge those governments that have not yet done so to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In December this year we will commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the convention, which sets out steps required to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres of life, including in the family. The completion of the legal framework for equality must be complemented by the creation of an enabling environment to secure de facto equality for women.

On this last International Women's Day before the new Millennium, let us rededicate ourselves to eliminating the discrimination and disadvantage to which women are still subjected — whether in the world of work, in access to health care services, in the provision of social services and social safety nets, in peace-building and reconstruction or, perhaps most importantly, in the home. Let us enter the new Millennium with the prospect of gender equality in sight for women everywhere.

EU grants Israel access to research programme

LUXEMBOURG (AFP) — European Union (EU) foreign ministers have agreed to continue Israel's access to the bloc's multi-billion dollar research budget after Britain and France dropped objections linked to the Israeli government's attitude to the Middle East peace process.

The decision means Israel will be a full member of the EU's fifth framework research programme. The programme is to run from 1998 to 2002 and will have a budget of some 15 billion euros (\$16.5 billion). Tenders for funds under the new programme are due to begin this month.

Israel joined the fourth framework programme in 1996 when it was already underway. As a result of the late start, it received only 55 million euros in financing compared with the 100 million it paid in, according to Israeli officials, who said they were "thrilled" with the EU decision.

They also underlined that Israel's technological edge over much of Europe meant it was in the EU's interest to have the country in the programme and sharing some of its know-how.

Indian software exports rise 52%

1400 02/70

Indian software exports rise 52%

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian software exports in 1998 shot up 52 per cent year-on-year to 95 billion rupees (\$2.3 billion), a trade body has said.

The National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom), a 520-member software body, said the "unprecedented" growth took place even as the Indian economy was in the grip of a slowdown.

"We have not witnessed this sort of growth in the last seven years. In spite of the slowdown in the general exports from the country, software exports have managed to keep up their growth rate," said Nasscom chief Dewang Mehta.

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR				
CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN				
NOTE: NEITHER COUNTRY NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES				
DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES				
CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR
US DOLLAR	4.8000	4.8000	4.7500	5.0000
SWITZERLAND STERLING	5.3000	5.1000	5.0000	5.0000
EURO	3.0400	2.9800	2.9400	2.9000
GERMANY MARK	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.1800	1.1800	1.2000	1.2400
JAPAN YEN*	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Emirates Holidays Dubai Shopping Festival now available in Jordan

EMIRATES HOLIDAYS, the largest wholesale tour operator in the Gulf and Middle East, has released attractively priced programmes to the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) for residents in Jordan.

The key advantage of Emirates Holidays programmes is the guarantee of hotel accommodation during a month when more than two million visitors are expected in Dubai and hotel rooms are hard to secure.

Emirates Holidays clients are

also entitled to use Emirates' special visa entry processing service. The airline is authorised by the Dubai Department of Immigration and Naturalisation to help in the processing of entry visas for its passengers, which enables visas to be issued within 24 hours of application.

Other value added benefits include extended check-out time in some hotels, complimentary transfers to shopping malls for guests residing at the Crown Plaza and discounts on food and beverage for those who stay at the Princeton and Sheraton Deira.

Peanuts

Leaping onto his horse, he galloped across the prairie.

Gallop Gallop Gallop Gallop Gallop

"Don't leave me!" she cried.

Gallop back Gallop back Gallop back Gallop back

THAT HAS TO BE THE DUMBEST THING I'VE EVER READ

YOU DON'T LIKE WESTERNS?

Andy Capp

THEIR TEAM HAD A COUPLE OF BRILLIANT PLAYERS

TALENTED, SKILLFUL ON THE BALL — A JOY TO BEHOLD!

IT WAS AN HORSCUR TO KICK 'EM

Mutt'n'Jeff

IT'S NO USE! I JUST CAN'T FALL ASLEEP!

MUTT, LIKE ME, TRY TO REMEMBER YOU'VE BEEN READING A BOOK ON HAPPINESS!

SLEEP! SLEEP! SLEEP!

SURELY MY EYES ARE FEELING HEAVY!

Z Z Z

Z Z Z

Z Z Z

THIS HYPNOTIZING METHOD OF SLEEPING SEEMED TO LEAVE ME MORE TIRED THAN BEFORE!

THE ME!

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

GLASBERGEN

"Lately I'm having trouble seeing my husband's good qualities."

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

DITAU

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

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GINOR

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WHYNOA

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INMALY

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Answer here: □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Anglin

HOW HUSBY TOOK IT WHEN SHE BOUGHT AN EXPENSIVE MATTRESS.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: NUDGE LYRIC SUNDAY MORGUE
 Answer: What the exotic dancer tried some

Business & Finance

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Businessmen urge government to reduce bureaucracy, give incentives

**** "THE DILEMMA** of the consecutive governments here is that they resort to the same method and same people to find solutions for existing problems and, as a result, the problems remain," said Yousef Suradi, a board member of the Amman Chamber of Commerce and of the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation. "Because we do not seriously look for the reasons and roots of the problem, other parties really suffering from the problem requiring a solution should be consulted in order to learn about the details and the remedies within a scientific and practical approach," he added.

Suradi stressed that the investment climate in Jordan should be consolidated and that we should not keep talking about security, stability and the firm exchange rate because these aspects exist in many countries and are not unique for Jordan. "As such, it is imperative to improve the investment conditions through granting real incentives and facilities," he said stressing that relations with Israel should not be put at the top of our priorities because that would impede Arab investments in the Kingdom.

Noting that we will soon be joining the World Trade Organisation and that such a step will be placing many export conditions on the national industry, Suradi highlighted the need for greater transparency to enlighten Jordanian industrialists and increase their awareness in order to upgrade production and boost competitiveness.

Hisbani Haj Hassan, a board member of the Amman Chamber of Commerce saw the short lives of Jordanian governments as being the biggest problem noting that a government does not last long to be able to achieve the programmes it targets. He said the government should meet with the private sector and get to know its problems and suffering especially from bureaucracy at official economic departments.

Fakhri Bilbeisi, a board member of the Jordanian Businessmen Association, called for a real and practical partnership between the private and public sectors so that committees can be formed to carry out a deep study and formulate an economic strategy as well as the mechanism to implement the strategy. "The strategies should remain and be obliging to consecutive governments," he said noting that that requires qualified economic personnel be present at concerned ministries and departments.

Bilbeisi stressed that a comprehensive review be conducted on administrative bottlenecks through reducing bureaucracy and completing financial and economic legislations as well as providing enough incentives to encourage local and foreign investments. He proposed forming a council of economic advisers grouping economic experts who would study our economic situation and work out emergency plans to face crises (Al Dustour).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MARCH 8, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be careful today following a hunch, especially in romance. Appearances and even feelings can be deceiving. If you're being coaxed to take action, keep your wits about you. Don't let another person, now matter how attractive, take control of your senses. You may need them to find your way home!

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) They say three's a crowd, but today, three could be more fun than two. That's because the two of you are having a bit of a spat. You might need a mediator or referee, so why don't you go visit one? You might settle this matter and never have to have this argument again. Wouldn't that be nice?

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your energy level is high, but you may also be feeling stressed. Are you trying to get a big job finished? You can't do it alone, but for you and a few buddies it'll be fun. And that's what you're doing it for, right? Well, partially, anyway. It could be the most important part, so don't leave it out!

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Your escapade should be pretty well under way by now. You might not have to do much of anything but enjoy the ride. Looks like a very attractive person wants to set your agenda. You'd be a fool to resist. Once you're sure you're headed in the right direction, full speed ahead!

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Although you might like to travel today, it'd be wiser to stay close to home. Have your friends come and visit you, instead of the other way around. That should fit in with your family's plans, but check with them first. Today especially, the folks you live with should come first, when you're still in love. 5 Energy; 4 Communications; 7

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) It's been said that Virgo like routines and today you can prove whether or not you fit that stereotype. Don't try anything new. Your lesson for today is to do the same routine over and over again until you have it down by heart. Once you do, you'll never forget it, and that'll be quite handy.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) An initial disagreement between you and somebody you love could lead to a consensus, if you keep talking long enough. It's an emotional issue, so one or the other of you may want to clam up. Not a good idea. Keep asking questions until you get the whole story.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're forceful, dynamic and good looking. Your natural charisma is intoxicating. Others watch to see what you want, so they can be the first to do your bidding. That's how you'd like it to be all the time, but it doesn't always happen quite that way. Today, it could.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you were good yesterday, and finished your chores, you should be able to get away today. If you weren't, well, you should finish whatever's left undone. That's the day's basic theme. If you've already finished the work, then play is the next item on your agenda. If not, not.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You may be short of money, and you may even be having difficulties with love, but you sure have plenty of friends. They'll make up for just about anything you lack. By the end of the day, you should feel blessed with abundance. Its partially payback for good deeds you've done in the past.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You might be able to increase your fortune today by being nice to an older person. There's no way you'll be coerced into doing this good deed for the money. But you might do it for love, and that's the only reason any deed is good, anyway.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Even if you're not quite sure how, it looks like things will work out well today. Just continue on the course you've already set. Don't get too wild and crazy. Stick with a familiar routine and your success is assured. Besides, you should be getting pretty good at this game by now.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

A.F.M. TRADE Sunday, 07-03-99

ACCESS 4646868

Company	Price	Change	Volume
BANKS			
ARAB BK	220.250	225.000	+2.18%
NTL BK	1.420	1.480	+4.23%
BK OF JORDAN	1.310	1.320	+0.76%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.420	1.430	+0.70%
THE HOUSING BK	2.820	2.830	+3.80%
JO. GULF BK	0.850	0.850	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.890	1.700	+0.59%
PRINCE AL FAYZ BK	0.520	0.520	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	292.960	- 1.4%	+2.28%
INSURANCE			
JO. INS	2.990	2.900	-3.01%
JO. FRENCH INS	2.850	2.850	0.00%
ARAB INS	2.000	2.050	+2.50%
INSURANCE INDEX	125.330	- 1.4%	-0.71%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.890	1.710	+1.18%
VEHICLES OWNERS	2.180	2.080	-5.02%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.910	0.920	+1.10%
JO. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.240	0.250	+4.17%
AL-RAT	7.000	7.050	+0.71%
COMMODORE	1.100	1.080	-1.82%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.910	0.920	+1.10%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVS. & E	1.950	1.950	0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.140	1.130	-0.88%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL INV	1.110	1.090	-1.80%
SERVICES INDEX	114.250	- 1.4%	+0.27%
INDUSTRY			
AT-TANKEEP	1.050	1.050	0.00%
CEMENT	3.750	3.750	0.00%
PHOSPHATE	2.330	2.370	+1.72%
ARAB POTASH	4.050	4.200	+3.70%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.800	10.800	0.00%
JO. TANNING	5.410	5.400	-0.18%
WORSTED MILLS	5.850	5.450	-3.54%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.010	3.050	+1.33%
CERAMIC INTL	1.250	1.280	+2.40%
JO. DAIRY	2.950	2.960	+0.34%
TUBACCO & CIGARET	1.480	1.510	+2.03%
NTL STEEL	0.500	0.500	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	6.100	6.150	+0.82%
JO. STEEL	1.020	1.010	-0.98%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.300	1.250	-3.78%
CRONINE	1.200	1.160	-3.33%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.400	0.400	0.00%
NTL IND	0.350	0.350	0.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.280	0.280	+3.57%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.840	0.880	+4.76%
NTL CABLE	0.480	0.500	+4.17%
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0.420	0.440	+4.76%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1.300	1.310	+0.77%
KAWTHER	0.320	0.330	+3.13%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.590	0.590	0.00%
NEW CAPLES	0.570	0.570	0.00%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.790	0.800	+1.27%
INDUSTRY INDEX	97.090	- 1.4%	+1.49%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK 75%	0.950	0.950	0.00%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.420	0.420	0.00%
JO. INTL. INS	0.740	0.700	-5.41%
ARAB FINANCIAL INVS	0.550	0.530	-3.64%
AL - EKRA	0.370	0.370	0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.440	0.450	+2.27%
AL DAWLATH	0.660	0.660	0.00%
ARAB INVESTORS	1.030	1.040	+0.97%
ARAB INTL. TRADE	0.190	0.180	-5.26%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.330	0.310	-6.06%
CENTURY	1.190	1.190	0.00%
NAMICO	0.160	0.170	+6.25%
UNION TOBACCO	3.600	3.550	-1.39%
UNITED ENG. INTL	0.180	0.180	0.00%
INTL CERAMIC	0.370	0.380	+2.70%
NTL POULTRY	0.570	0.550	-3.51%
ARAB JO. INVS	0.950	1.000	+5.26%
GRAND INDEX	185.59	- 1.4%	+1.93%

Japan's top 15 banks apply for \$60 billion in public funds

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's top 15 banks have formally asked for a combined 7.459 billion yen (\$60 billion) in life-line cash injections from the government to help them clear out bad loans, officials said.

The money, which will be poured into the banks at the end of the month, is the key part of a major bank recapitalisation programme enacted last October.

Japan's Vice Finance Minister Knji Tanami said he "strongly hopes" the money will stabilise shaky banks, by "strengthening operating bases and drastically restructuring their operations."

In the coming days the Financial Reconstruction Commission, a new body charged with tackling Japan's banking crisis, will meet the heads of the banks and is expected to approve the long-awaited applications on March 12, reports said.

In exchange for receiving the taxpayers' money, banks are obliged to implement drastic restructuring measures. Much of the money will be in the form of preferential shares which the government can convert into ordinary shares, giving it voting rights.

In three cases, Daiwa Bank Ltd., Mitsui Trust and Banking Co. Ltd. and Chuo Trust and Banking Ltd., the government would hold enough shares to control the banks.

Over the next four years, the 15 banks aim to axe 19,631 employees, some 13.8 per cent of their total workforce, reports said.

Japan's authorities have been pressing the banks to take on larger injections of public money, to help restore their weak capital levels. Under the new bank programme there is a 25 trillion yen pool of funds available for these injections, part of a total 60 trillion yen scheme.

Analysts say the amount requested will still not be enough to wipe out all their bad loans and a second round of applications will likely follow later in the year.

Fuji Bank Ltd. applied for the largest slice of funds, one trillion yen, some of which it will use to take over the troubled Yasuda Trust and Banking Co. Ltd. later this month.

Japan's banks close their annual financial accounts at the end of March, a factor which has finally pressed many into mergers and alliances as they struggle to cope with their bad loan crisis.

Fuji Bank said it was now facing a 760 billion yen pre-tax loss for the year to March and a net loss of 480 billion yen.

Asia-Pacific police forces pledge to tackle money laundering

TOKYO (AFP) — Asia-Pacific police forces have vowed to crack down on global money laundering worth a trillion dollars a year, and the banking systems that hide them in some island states.

"Because it is such a large problem, it is necessary to have as much international cooperation and regional cooperation as possible," said Rick McDonnell, head of the Asia Pacific group on money laundering's secretariat.

The meeting here of 90 law enforcement and regulatory experts from across the region agreed to set up a working group to examine the problem of underground banks, the group said in a statement.

It also decided to set up more financial intelligence units, in an effort to improve the exchange of information, and to step up the detection and prosecution of offenders.

The total sum of laundered proceeds from drug sales, robbery and theft was estimated to be more than one trillion dollars a year, McDonnell told a news conference after the meeting.

The law enforcers tackled the problem of small island states, including some in the Pacific and Caribbean acting as offshore banking centres and in some cases providing a haven for money laundering.

McDonnell said. They wanted to draw those states into the worldwide anti-money laundering network.

"There have been differences in response," said McDonnell. "Some of the countries have agreed to put in place the standards and the laws" to tackle the problem. But "some have not," he added.

"The problem with states that have not put in place these international standards is that they will not or cannot provide investigators with information of any kind. And that therefore provides a big opportunity for organised criminals to effectively hide their profits," McDonnell indicated.

Some island states and other offshore banking centres profited from the income of such loose banking systems, he said. They should be brought into line and "pressure from whatever quarter will help that."

One weapon in the battle against money laundering was information provided by financial institutions reporting on suspicious transfers, although care was needed not to infringe on privacy, he said.

Another was electronic interceptions "to allow police in certain restricted cases to determine what organised criminals are doing."

"The magnitude of the problem is substantial. Transmissions of proceeds of crime through underground banking systems are not limited to the Asia-Pacific region but are global," the group said in a statement.

Japan's police called for international cooperation to tackle the problem.

The force said underground banks had sent nearly 100 billion yen (\$833 million) overseas, including to China, South Korea and Thailand, in 15 cases uncovered by police since 1997.

McDonnell said law enforcers at the meeting were encouraged by the cases uncovered by Japan, and by impending legislation to bolster defences against money laundering.

But "it was clear that many countries already had standards and procedures in place which were in advance of Japan," he added.

"It was also clear that representatives looked to Japan to improve its anti-money laundering measures," McDonnell concluded.

Syria to establish \$21.6m bank to develop exports

DAMASCUS (R) — An export development bank capitalised at one billion Syrian pounds (\$21.6 million) will be approved by the Syrian cabinet within two months, a senior economy ministry official has said.

"It is a very serious and demanding project for us and we expect its legal procedures to end within two months," the official told Reuters.

Syria's banking system was nationalised in 1963 and now consists of a central bank overseeing six state banks, including industry and agriculture institutions. The commercial bank is dominant, holding 85 per cent of the sector balance sheet.

The official said he could give no details of steps the new bank would take to encourage investors.

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World Indoor Athletics Championships

Greene gets revenge as Gebrselassie seals stunning double

MAEBASHI (AFP) — American sprint king Maurice Greene got a revenge win at the World Indoor Athletics Championships here on Sunday as the emperor of distance running Haile Gebrselassie sealed a double triumph.

But there were shock defeats for Olympic 100m women's champion Gail Devers, Danish world indoor and outdoor 800 metres recordholder Wilson Kipketer and Mozambiquean Maria Mutola, while the United States and Russia got world records in the men's and women's 4x400m relay.

A week after losing to Tim Harden at the U.S. indoor championships, Greene overcame a nervous start to beat Harden by nine hundredths of a second in the men's 60m final.

Greene, the 100m world champion, clocked 6.42sec which was three hundredths outside his world record. Britain's Jason Gardener was third in 6.46.

Greene, who was warned for a false start in the first round, powered ahead in the final but Harden was looming dangerously at the finish.

"It was a tough race. I did not see Harden as I ran but I knew he would be there. He is a tough competitor and getting better and better."

In the women's 60m final, Devers lost to Ekaterini Thanou of Greece who had a winning time of 6.96sec. Inger Miller of the United States was third. The American blamed her defeat on long-standing injuries.

Gebrselassie proved his amazing versatility with a dramatic 1,500 metres victory from Kenya's Laban Rotich to become the first man to win two titles at a championship.

Gebrselassie earned \$100,000 for winning the 1,500m and 3,000m races. He was matched on the women's side by Gabriela Szabo of Romania, who stormed in the 3,000m title following her 1,500m victory on Saturday.

The 25-year-old Ethiopian, running in his first major 1,500m final, kicked after the final bend in overtake Rotich a few strides from the finish line. He said: "I had to wait until I had a chance in spirit and it only came in the last 50m."

The Ethiopian timed 3min 33.77sec. Rotich clocked 3:33.98 and Spain's new European record holder Andres Diaz was third.

Kipketer, Kenyan-born but a naturalised Dane, was beaten by John Bntha, who got South Africa's ever medal at the championships in a time of 1:45.47. Germany's Nico Matthebon was third.

Kipketer, who failed to win a medal at last year's European championships after recovering from a severe bout of malaria, still looked a shadow of the athlete that broke the world indoor record twice at the 1997 world indoor championships.

Mozambique's Mutola saw her dreams of a fourth consecutive world indoor title shattered when she was overtaken by European indoor champion Ludmila Formanova (1:56.90) of the



Ekaterini Thanou of Greece jubilates with her national flag after winning the gold medal in the women's 60 meters final in the World Indoor Track and Field Championships in Maebashi, northwest of Tokyo. Thanou clocked 6.96 seconds (AP photo)



Grit Breuer of Germany jubilates after winning the women's 400 meters final in the World Indoor Track and Field Championships in Maebashi, northwest of Tokyo. Breuer won the gold medal in 50.80 seconds (AP photo)



Johan Botha of South Africa (396), right, Nico Matthebon of Germany (204) and Wilson Kipketer of Denmark (111) compete in the men's 800 metres final during the World Indoor Track and Field Championships in Maebashi, northwest of Tokyo. Bntha won the gold medal in 1:45.47. Kipketer was second in 1:45.49 and Matthebon was third in 1:45.74 (AP photo)

Czech Republic in the final stretch of the women's 800m final.

Romania's Szabo claimed the women's 3,000m indoor title for the third straight time with a time of 8:36.42.

"The first time I was surprised because I was in my first year in junior competition," said Szabo.

"The second time I was also surprised because I beat the great Sonia O'Sullivan. But this time I expected it and I think I will win next time as well," she added.

The Romanian surge left Zahra Ouaziz of Morocco in second (8:38.43). Regina Jacobs of the United States was third.

The U.S. men and Russian women set new world records for the 4x400m relay at the World Indoor Athletics Championships here Sunday.

The American men, anchored by Milton Campbell, ended the championships with a new 4x400m record of 3:02.83, beating the previous mark of 3:03.05 set by Germany on March 10, 1991.

The Russian women, winners of the 1997 championships in Paris with the previous world mark of 3min 26.84 seconds, clocked 3:24.25 earlier.

"I knew we were running fast, but I didn't know it was that fast. The whole race was actually a lot easier than I had thought," said anchor Natalya Nazarova.

Britain celebrated a golden double through Jamie Baulch in the men's 400m with a time of 45.73sec and Ashia Hansen in the women's triple jump with a best of the year distance of 15.02m from her first attempt.

Germany's Grit Breuer won the women's 400 metres, sealing her comeback from a three-year drug ban for which she still insists she is innocent.

Breuer, 27, won in 50.80sec, the best time of the year, ahead of Falilat Ogunkoya of Nigeria (51.25) and Jearl Miles-Clark of the United States.

Breuer was suspended for three years with fellow East German star Katrin Krabbe and came back in 1995. She has since been twice European 400m champion.

Cuba's Javier Sotomayor won the men's high jump on a comeback after he and Vyacheslav Vronin of Russia both cleared 2.36m.

Ivan Pedroso of Cuba won the men's long jump for a record fourth time with a leap of 8.62m, a championship record.



American sprinter Maurice Greene (467) of Los Angeles, Ca., crosses the finish line to win the men's 60 meters final in the World Indoor Track and Field Championships in Maebashi, northwest of Tokyo. Green won the gold medal in 6.42 seconds, a championships record. At right is fourth finisher Matt Shirlington of Australia (AP photo)

Maier wins Super-G Cup in Austrian race sweep

KVITFJELL, Norway (R) — Hermann Maier clinched the Super-G World Cup on Sunday by leading an Austrian sweep of the first three places in the discipline's penultimate race of the season.

The victory pushed Maier into a strong position to retain his overall World Cup title. He has almost caught the leaders, Kjetil Andre Aamodt and Lasse Kjus of Norway, with only four vents to come, in Spain.

The Austrian, who won two golds at the World Championships, once almost lost his balance on the steep, twisting Kvitfjell course but ended in one minute 30.70 seconds, ahead of team mate Stephan Eberharter on 1:31.17 and Andreas Schifferer on 1:31.29.

It was Maier's fourth Super-G win of the season, out of five races, and took him to 480 points against 310 for nearest rival Eberharter with one race — worth 100 points to the winner — left in the discipline, in Sierra Nevada, Spain, on Thursday.

"After two bad downhill races here I had to show everyone I'm not bad at skiing," Maier said after placing 16th and 11th respectively on Friday and Saturday in downhill both won by Schifferer. "I was really motivated to win."

"I'll try to fight to the last event," the 26-year-old Maier said, changing his tune after saying on Saturday that he believed his chances of overall victory had evaporated.

Aamodt now leads overall with 1,267 points ahead of Kjus on 1,259 and Maier on 1,242, promising up an exciting finale in Spain. Kjus ended Sunday's race sixth, Aamodt eighth.

Maier, a former bricklayer known for his aggressive style, said he was unsure whether to race the slalom, an event he does not normally enter, in Sierra Nevada. Both Kjus and Aamodt are all-rounders strong at slalom.

Aamodt said he would concentrate mainly on the slalom and giant slalom in Spain. "Now it's so even we

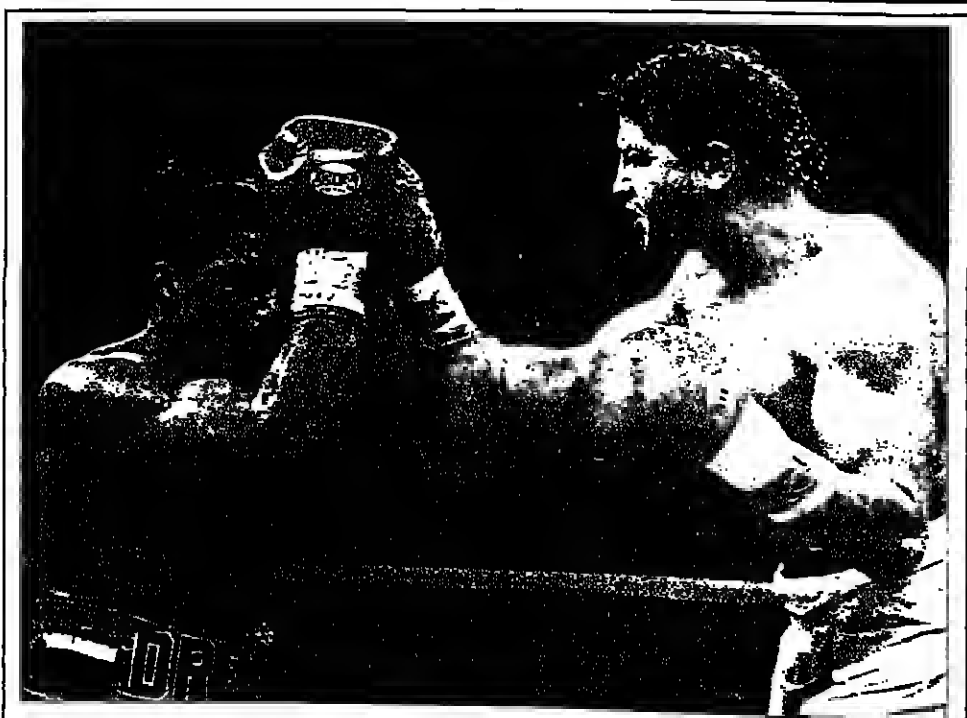
have to fight as much as we can," he said.

"Maier can win the giant slalom and the Super-G. If he has good skis he can also do well in the downhill," said Aamodt, who won the overall world cup in 1994. "Today's race was as expected for me. I've been seventh and eighth all season."

Both Maier and Kjus said they were finding it hard to work up motivation after the World Championships in Vail, where Kjus won medals in every event and Maier won two golds. Aamodt was less impressive, winning a gold and a bronze.

"I'm not disappointed," said Kjus, the 1996 overall World Cup winner. "I'm disappointed that I've been taking so much time off sick." Kjus is back this weekend after a bout of bronchitis forced him to miss races in Germany last week.

He said he thought Maier was favourite to retain the overall crown, something no male skier has done since Pirmin Zurbriggen of Switzerland in 1988.



WBA Jr. middleweight champion Laurent Boudouani of Sallanches, France, land a right to the head of 1996 Olympic gold medalist David Reid, right, of Philadelphia, Pa., during the first round of their scheduled 12-round bout at the Atlantic City Convention Hall Ballroom in Atlantic City, N.J. (AP photo)

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	RONIN	FORREST GUMP	AL ZA'EEM	ALWAD MAHROUS TBA' AL WAZIR	DR. DOOLITTLE	THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY	CLOSED
	Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:00	Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Mamser asks to ease Games financial procedures

AMMAN — The government has called for facilitating financial procedures for the Aug. 15-31, 9th Pan-Arab Games (Al Hussein Tournament) and provide sport federations with necessary equipment for their preparations. Minister of Youth and Sports Mohammad Kheir Mamser stressed the importance of helping the federations purchase equipment especially those with international specifications. In a recent meeting with Secretary General of the Jordan Olympic Committee Ismat Kurdi, and Games Deputy Director Abdul Ggani Tahalat, Dr. Mamser asked the Games financial manager to amend some articles of the financial regulations and remove all obstacles facing the Games.

Orthodoxi Club to scrap women's handball

AMMAN — Women's handball activities in Al Orthodoxi Club are currently suspended and might be cancelled, according to chief of the club's Sports Committees Fadi Zreigat. In a statement, Zreigat added that Al Orthodoxi, one of the country's leading sports clubs, has not officially been informed about players registration announced by the Jordan Handball Federation and thus the club did not register any player. The registration period ended February 28. There are three women's handball teams in the Kingdom: Kufroum, Hartha and Al Orthodoxi.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Officials worried by slow pace of work for Pan-Arab Games

15 countries confirm participation; more sponsorship on the way

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — With the 9th Pan-Arab Games only five months away, officials are still grappling with a host of administrative and organisational issues which seem to have shifted the focus from the technical aspect of hosting the century's last gathering of Arab youth.

Many officials had voiced that concern months ago. Now Mohammad Kheir Mamser, who took over the portfolio of Sports and Youth in the newly-appointed cabinet, has announced an emergency plan to activate all committees and "get the ball rolling."

"Quite simply, some committees have not started to do their job. They either need to be reactivated or annulled," Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Vice President Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz told the Jordan Times Sunday.

Fawwaz was one of the foremost officials to warn that the pace of work was too slow months ago. Now with time really catching up, the concentration on finding a solution to various problems might overshadow a more important issue: Will Jordan's teams be competitive enough as host country?

"We have three main points to be solved as soon as possible. Preparing athletes, buying necessary equipment and making financial procedures more flexible regarding these two issues," Sari Hamdan, chief of the JOC technical committee noted.

"The three are interrelated and we must

move fast to solve them," said Hamdan. "We should also give our athletes the chance to be released from work to train and prepare. Competition will be really tough."

Another point complicating matters for officials is the fact that only 15 countries have confirmed participation.

They are Tunisia, Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Jordan.

Iraq notified the organising committee that a 400-strong delegation will take part in 24 sports while Qatar's delegation is 205 strong.

Hamdan said the final word from participating countries was expected this month, after an earlier Dec. 31 deadline was not met.

"We have to know the nature of participation and the final number of teams and events for the success of all organisational aspects," Hamdan noted explaining that any event with less than five teams for men and four for women will be cancelled.

Insiders said the late confirmation by some countries can be explained by a number of factors.

Athletes from North African countries might have reservations about taking part in the Games, which coincide with other international events such as the African Tournament and the World Athletics Championships. Officials expected the strain between Gulf countries and Iraq to also affect the Games.

The preliminary number of 26 events is expected to be trimmed. The 8th Pan Arab Games in Beirut had 19 countries taking part in 20 sports events.

Twenty-five sport facilities, including three sports cities will host the events.

Fawwaz said the construction of a JD4 million multi-purpose indoor stadium with a 7,000-seat capacity; an Olympic-size swimming pool were on track. However, the track and field stadium, in addition to installing and upgrading facilities with electronic timing machines and other requirements were moving at a slower pace.

As for the technical aspect of preparing Jordan's teams Fawwaz noted that only a few federations were adopting a carefully planned strategy and were preparing their teams in a serious manner.

Fawwaz said most federations had not shown a serious attitude in dealing with the challenge and that the situation needed an urgent remedy.

The last regional event Jordan took part in was the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok in December, where Jordan only managed five medals, four by the taekwondo team. The rest of the athletes failed to even match their own national records.

After a recent visit to Amman, the Arab Ministerial Committee examining Jordan's preparations for the Games underlined their support for the Amman Games, saying that they would recommend to the Arab League that Jordan receive additional funding and

assistance.

Since the Arab Sports Federation (ASF) advanced the date of the upcoming Games to 1999 instead of 2001, the Council of Arab Sports Ministers increased aid to the Kingdom to enable it to prepare infrastructure and update sports facilities.

Aid received so far includes \$200,000 from the Council of Arab Ministers who have promised another \$300,000.

The council will also try to garner more support from the Gulf Cooperation Council and other states able to sponsor the mega-event.

Additional sponsorship for Jordan's bid will be amassed through lowering the 50 per cent ASF margin of profit on promotion and television coverage.

The Jordanian government had initially earmarked JD18 million for the event.

Lebanon, which hosted the 8th Pan-Arab Games in 1997, received \$28 million from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to help in construction of sports facilities destroyed during the civil war.

The Amman Games will be followed by the first Arab Paralympics.

The Pan-Arab Games have only been held eight times: Alexandria in 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985, Damascus 1992 and Beirut 1997.

Fast Eddie enjoys a win at last at Australian Grand Prix

MELBOURNE (R) — Eddie Irvine knows a lot about having fun. On Sunday he learned what it was like to be a Formula One winner.

On a day when McLaren drivers Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard and Irvine's team mate Michael Schumacher were expected to hog the spotlight, it was the Northern Ireland driver who

ended up celebrating at a drama-filled Australian Grand Prix.

"It's fantastic, amazing," said the 33-year-old Irvine after breaking through for his maiden F1 triumph in his 82nd start.

Irvine's victory was the 120th for Ferrari but their first on Australian soil since 1987 when Austrian Gerhard

Berger won in Adelaide. But more importantly, it brought to an end debate over whether Irvine had the qualities needed to win.

The No. 2 in the Ferrari camp behind Schumacher, Irvine has a reputation as a playboy who loves a good time as much as he likes racing and he has attracted criticism as a result.

It meant little that Irvine inherited the lead after the McLaren's world champion Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard retired with mechanical problems after opening up a commanding lead early in the first race of the season.

As sections of the 118,000-strong crowd at the Albert Park circuit chanted his name, Irvine obliged by spraying champagne in all directions in the pit-lane. He emerged sodden but grinning widely and embracing anyone within reach.

"It's great, everyone slaps me off because I go out and have fun and stuff like that," he said.

"So the young drivers coming up at least know you can win in Formula One and still have a good time." Ironically, the champagne Irvine and Ferrari used to toast their surprise victory was given to

them in a friendly gesture by arch-rivals McLaren, who had no use for their stock after a dismal start to the year.

The triumph brought to a close an amazing weekend for the Ferrari team, who are chasing their first drivers' championship in 20 years.

After Friday's practice sessions and Saturday's qualifying, the famous red cars were struggling in the wake of the front-running McLaren mp4-14 racers.

German Schumacher, as dour as Irvine is ebullient, went into Sunday's race hoping for divine intervention. Instead it was his team mate who was the recipient of McLaren's ill-fortune.

"I was a bit lucky today," Irvine admitted. "The McLaren's had problems; they're not always going to have a problem. At least when they did it was there."

Irvine said that after troubles with the wet-up of his new

F399 racer in the lead-up to Sunday's race, he and his mechanic "did our own thing (with the car)".

"We were convinced the way we wanted the car, what tyres we wanted to run," said Irvine, who used a soft-compound variety.

"I'm glad I stuck to my guns...the only mistake all weekend was that my qualifying lap was crap," Irvine qualified sixth fastest, 1.8 seconds behind pole winner Hakkinen.

"I came here with very little testing in the F399 and it is good Michael did so much testing and made the car reliable for me," he grinned. "He

sweats and I get the glory, thanks Michael." He added: "It's fantastic to do it after such a long time."

To all the people who helped me...a big thank you. There are so many I'd be here for hours. I really needed a lot of help to get here, believe me." Asked how it felt to be leading the world championship, Irvine, who is contracted to be the supporting man to Schumacher's bid for Ferrari's first drivers' championship since 1979, said: "It feels good — I think I'll go and see Jean Todt (the team's sporting director) and see where we go from here."



Ferrari's Eddie Irvine of Britain, right, streaks across the finish line to take the checkered flag during the Australian Formula One Grand Prix on Sunday (AP photo)

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Iran says oil market open to U.S., calls for end to embargo

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran stepped up the pressure to end the U.S. embargo with the surprise announcement Sunday that U.S. oil companies face "no obstacle" to doing business in the Iranian oil industry.

"There is no obstacle to U.S. oil companies participating in oil development projects in Iran," Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi said, clearly referring to Washington's unilateral trade embargo which prohibits U.S. companies from doing business here.

He underscored the point by stressing that the embargo served only to hamper U.S. business interests.

"The Americans must come to terms with reality and see that there is no solution other than changing their sanctions policy," Kharazi said at a press conference.

"This policy serves only to hurt American companies."

Kharazi's surprise announcement comes just days after a top U.S. oil executive told the U.S. Congress that the embargo meant U.S. firms could not compete on equal terms with companies from Europe and elsewhere.

"The Iran-Libya Sanctions Act [ILSA] is proving to be a counterproductive foreign policy tool for defending American interests in the region," Michael Stinson, senior vice president of oil giant Conoco, told the Senate International Relations Committee.

"I believe the Congress should recognise that ILSA has created more problems than it solved and repeal the sanctions on Iran," he said.

"I find it almost tragic that the French are building relations in Iran in ways we cannot," he said.

French oil firm Elf Aquitaine and Italy's ENI signed a \$540 million deal earlier this month to develop Iran's Doroud oil field in a direct challenge to the ILSA, known as the D'Amato law after its chief congressional sponsor, then-Senator Alfonse D'Amato.

Kharazi said those firms — along with France's Total, which signed a \$2 billion deal with Iran in 1997 — "have played a key role in breaking the D'Amato law."

Washington passed the law in 1996, one year after imposing a unilateral economic embargo against Tehran.

The bill calls for harsh sanctions against any foreign firm investing more than \$20 million in the oil sectors of Iran or Libya, states Washington accuses of supporting international terrorism.

The U.S. State Department said last week it was looking at slapping sanctions on Elf and ENI over the most recent deal.

"We will assess the implications," said State Department spokesman James Foley. "We'll take appropriate action."

"The U.S. remains strongly opposed to investment in Iran's petroleum sector," he said. "We have repeatedly urged the governments of France and Italy at the most senior levels to discourage this investment."

French energy group Total, in partnership with Russia's Gazprom and Petros of Malaysia, was the first to flout the law with its 1997 agreement to develop Iran's giant South Pars field in the Persian Gulf.

In the face of intense international pressure, Washington finally granted the Total project an exemption because it con-

cluded that the sanctions would not prevent the project from going forward.

In exchange, Washington won pledges from European governments that they would step up efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, according to U.S. officials.

But some European officials have interpreted that move as a de facto scaling back of the D'Amato law and concluded that Washington lacked the will or the means to enforce it.

The second largest oil producer in OPEC behind Saudi Arabia, Iran depends on oil for more than 80 per cent of its hard currency revenues and has been hard hit by the worldwide slump in crude prices.

Last month, it announced that a deal worth \$200 million had been agreed in principle with the Canadian firm Bow Valley and Britain's Premier Oil to develop the offshore Balal site.

The State Department said it had not received official word the deal had been agreed but vowed to review the matter thoroughly.



Unpleasant pheasant shoos off postman

LONDON (R) — A postman is refusing to deliver mail to a Welsh village after being terrorised by a pheasant. The bird, nicknamed George by locals, set up home on the village green in Wiseman's Bridge after escaping from a local shoot. George flapped his wings and chased the postman on his rounds. So the villagers now have to collect their mail from a nearby post office. "We stop deliveries if there is a dangerous dog and it's the same with this pheasant," said a Royal Mail spokesman.

Man sentenced for smelly shoe theft

SINGAPORE (R) — A man who stole smelly shoes because he was addicted to their odor was sentenced to 25 weeks in jail by a Singapore court, the Straits Times newspaper reported Friday. Truck driver Zainal Mohamed Esa, 43, did not steal the shoes to sell, but out of a "burning desire, akin to that of a drug addict, to sniff used pairs of shoes," his lawyer Rai Ratan Kumar was quoted as saying. Zainal, whose obsession was a psychological need, said his lawyer, kept the shoes until the smell waned and then gave them to the Salvation Army or tried to return them to their owners. Police got on the scent of the shoe thief after a tip-off from a resident living near the site of the thefts.

Man held for stealing remains

SEOUL (AP) — Police arrested a man Sunday for allegedly stealing the skeletal remains of a South Korean tycoon's father and holding them for ransom. The remains were also found. Lim Jong-soon, 34, a coffee shop owner, allegedly dug up the tomb of Shin Jin-soo, stole the remains and demanded \$666,000 for the return of the remains last week. Shin, who died in 1973, is the father of Shin Kyuk-ho, chairman of the Lotte Group, South Korea's 11th largest conglomerate. Police said Lim admitted to having stolen the remains, which were found on the rooftop of his coffee shop.

Mexicans thrilled at home-grown sex scandal

MEXICO CITY (R) — A sex scandal erupted in Mexico last week when a male high court judge and a female public security official were allegedly caught having sex in a parked car. The case captivated the Mexican media because of its resemblance to the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal which led to President Clinton's impeachment. Two police officers allegedly caught Judge Enrique Sanchez Sandoval of the Superior Tribunal of Justice red-handed at dawn Wednesday in the city center with Public Ministry agent Dora Patricia Frago Solis. The couple, who had been working during the night, were just yards away from one of the \$10 a night motels used by amorous Mexican couples for secret rendezvous. "We must point out that the facts do not directly imply a crime was committed," the capital's Attorney General's Office said in a statement.

Red faces over palace gaffe

HANOI (R) — Red faces abounded at the British embassy in Hanoi Friday after Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, launched the mission's official Website only to notice that his mother's address was wrong, an embassy source said. The Duke was browsing the new site and its links when he burst out laughing after seeing that the embassy had moved Queen Elizabeth's London residence of Buckingham Palace to Number 10 Downing Street, the source added. Number 10 Downing Street is the official residence of Britain's prime minister. The gaffe was swiftly corrected, said the source.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Three arrested in Israel protest

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police arrested three persons during a rowdy protest demonstration outside the Defence Ministry to demand that Israel withdraw its troops from south Lebanon. About 35 members of a new group called "The Red Line" tried to block traffic outside the Defence Ministry and some members tried to force their way into the compound, witnesses said. Police hauled away two men and a woman for blocking the street, they said. Organisers described the Red Line as an angrier version of the Four Mothers movement which has been peacefully demonstrating for months for a pullout of Israeli troops from Lebanon.

'Lebanon warned over another Amoun'

BEIRUT (AFP) — Israel warned Lebanon, via the United States, against any new effort by protesters to free villages to the Israeli-occupied zone to south Lebanon, the Arabic newspaper Al Hayat reported Sunday. U.S. Charge d'Affaires David Hill "informed several parties that the Israelis could not stand back and do nothing if they are faced with another Amoun," a village "liberated" from Israeli occupation last month, the paper said. Hill told Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss Saturday that "Israel looks unfavorably upon the demonstrations that occurred at Amoun and the return of the village to Lebanese sovereignty," Al Hayat quoted officials as saying.

Ecevit tours Turkey's southeast

DIYARBAKIR (AP) — As Turkey's prime minister toured the southeast, boasting the upper hand in the war with Kurdish guerrillas, rebels claimed Sunday that they shot down an army helicopter, killing 30 soldiers. The Germany-based Kurdish news agency DEM reported that all perished aboard the U.S.-made Sikorsky helicopter in the southeastern province of Hakkari, the latest strike in the war for autonomy that the rebels recently vowed would escalate in defiance of the recent capture of their leader Abdullah Ocalan. Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit and eight ministers spent the day in the region's capital, Diyarbakir. Sunday, making the first high-profile visit to the southeast since the capture last month in Kenya of Ocalan. Some 3,000 police and soldiers were reported deployed in the city following threats by Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) to punish anyone who met with Ecevit.

Iranian students protest cleric's arrest

TEHRAN (AFP) — Several hundred Iranian students demonstrated at Tehran University Sunday over the arrest of leading liberal cleric Mohsen Kadivar, defying calls to postpone the rally over fears of violence. Riot police stationed around the campus put a quick end to a shouting match that erupted between protesters and Islamist hardliners but otherwise there was no violence. The students chanted "Kadivar must be released" and "Death to the monopoly," a reference to hardliners in the Islamic regime such as Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, who heads Iran's powerful judiciary. The Kadivar case has galvanised public attention here and some 200 journalists signed a petition saying his arrest was unconstitutional and an "offense" to Iran's writers and intellectuals, the radical newspaper Salam reported Sunday.

Turkey detains 330 over protests

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish police detained some 330 people on Sunday in connection with protests on the eve of the United Nations International Women's Day. Anadolu news agency said. In the western city of Izmir, police took into custody 241 people, mostly women, who were preparing for a demonstration on Monday organised by Turkey's main legal Kurdish party, the People's Democracy Party (Hadepe). Provincial Hadepe leaders were among those detained ahead of an unauthorised protest which around 2,000 people were expected to attend in an historic district of the city.

Camel kills Saudi child

RIYADH (AFP) — A camel killed his master's five-year-old son in anger at being tied down alone during the mating season, a Saudi newspaper reported on Sunday. The camel bit the child by the waist and shook him violently to death. The father could only look on in shock before shooting the animal dead, the daily Okaz said. It said camel owners in the Diba area of northern Saudi Arabia had been warned not to tie down their animals during the breeding season.

'Cohen behind death of Bahraini emir'

BAGHDAD (AP) — The official newspaper of Iraq's ruling Baath party on Sunday blamed U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen for the heart attack that killed the ruler of Bahrain. "The cause of death of Bahrain's emir was the harsh words that he heard from the U.S. defence secretary, William Cohen," the Al Thawra newspaper quoted anonymous sources in Nicosia, Cyprus as saying. "The emir was very affected," the front-page story added.

U.S. to sell air-to-air missiles to Saudis

RIYADH (R) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen told Saudi Arabia on Sunday that Washington would sell the kingdom advanced "AMRAAM" air-to-air missiles to improve Saudi security in the Gulf.

Cohen agreed at a meeting with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan to increase joint army training exercises in the kingdom and to jointly study the threat from some chemical and biological weapons, a senior U.S. official told reporters.

"We told the Saudis we will sell them AMRAAM," said the official, who asked not to be identified.

Cohen, on the second leg of a nine-nation visit to the Gulf and the Middle East to solidify support for military containment of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, announced on Saturday that the United States would also sell such missiles to Bahrain.

The U.S. defence official told reporters Cohen had "a very productive meeting" with Prince Sultan and that the two also discussed the security threat from Iran and Iraq in the region.

Saudi Arabia, a key Middle East ally for Washington, will become the fourth nation to acquire the advanced, medium-range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAM).

At a cost of more than \$380,000 each, they are extremely sophisticated and could be used by Saudi fighter jets to shoot down enemy aircraft at ranges of more than 80 km.

The promised AMRAAMs are part of a thrust by Washington to improve the defences of moderate Gulf states, Israel already has such missiles and Washington has approved their sale to the United Arab Emirates.

U.S. officials said Bahrain planned to buy 27 of the missiles, which are made by Raytheon Co.

The official said no details had been worked out yet on how many missiles would be sold to Saudi Arabia or when they would be delivered.

"They also agreed to form a joint U.S.-Saudi committee to study the chemical and biological weapons threat and responses to the threat," the official told reporters travelling with Cohen.

The U.S. army conducts year-round exercises with Kuwaiti forces in Kuwait, but keeps a very low-key army presence in Saudi Arabia. The official gave no details on the planned increase in training exercises in Saudi Arabia.

Cohen also met Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah on Sunday before flying to Oman, where he was due to meet Sultan Qaboos.

Qadhafi, Mubarak hold more talks on Lockerbie case

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak held a third round of talks with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi here Sunday in a bid to secure an agreement on a handover by Tripoli of two suspects in the Lockerbie bombing.

Egyptian Information Minister Safwat Sherif told reporters here that there would be further meetings which he said "constitute a step along the road to a settlement" of the long Western standoff with Libya.

"Contacts are taking place with the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and other concerned parties on the guarantees Libya needs before handing over its two nationals suspected of involvement in the Lockerbie attack," he added.

Arab diplomats said the two leaders have been discussing an Arab proposal that would amount to seeking a three-

month extension of a one-month U.S. and British ultimatum for Libya to surrender the suspects.

The extra time might be needed to secure guarantees for their trial at The Hague such as ensuring that no other Libyans will face prosecution in the future, the diplomats added.

The United States and Britain on Feb. 28 set a one-month deadline for Libya to surrender the suspects wanted for the

December 1988 bombing of the Pan Am airliner which killed 270 people over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Colonel Qadhafi, who rejects the U.S. and British ultimatum, claims Washington and London have backed down from the deadline and has said a deal was near.

Mubarak and Qadhafi met twice here Saturday to discuss how to finalise a deal.

Under Arab proposals floated

at the talks here, three Arab foreign ministers would travel to London, Washington and The Hague to discuss Libya's conditions for handing over the suspects, Arab diplomats said.

"The Arab ministers would negotiate with an open mind [the conditions] which are the last obstacle to finalising an agreement" for handing the two over for trial, said an Arab diplomat who asked not to be named.

Final fade for legendary filmmaker Stanley Kubrick

LONDON (AFP) — Stanley Kubrick's love affair with movies began on his thirteenth birthday and he pursued it obsessively throughout his life, producing a string of near-masterpieces on themes that expressed the fears and phobias of the times.

With Kubrick's death Sunday at the age of 70, cinema loses its greatest perfectionist, a control freak who demanded the last word on every stage in the process from screenplay, via music, lighting and editing, to the final touches of post-production.

Along the way he drove innumerable collaborators to distraction. The distinguished French filmmaker Bertrand Tavernier resigned as publicist for "A Clockwork Orange" with a cable sent to Kubrick care of Warner Brothers in Hollywood, reading: "I resign, stop. As a filmmaker you are a genius, but as an employer you are an imbecile."

He also became a recluse, retiring to a manor in the English countryside and

retreating behind thick clouds of rumour and myth.

From "Paths of Glory" (1958) — a pacifist tract banned for many years in France — onwards, every Kubrick film has been an event. In 1960 Kirk Douglas, having rowed with director Anthony Mann, called in Kubrick to rescue the multi-million dollar epic "Spartacus" under the impression that the tyro would be his contented servant. Kubrick instead flexed his muscles, hiring and firing actors as he saw fit.

With "Lolita" (1962) Kubrick took on Nabokov's sulphurous novel on underage sex, and in 1964 called on Peter Sellers again for the brilliant "Dr. Strangelove," a comedy about nuclear annihilation.

With "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968) Kubrick produced cinema's hymn to the space age, but in 1971 came back to earth with "A Clockwork Orange," a screen adaptation of Anthony Burgess' dystopian novel which incurred the wrath of

Britain's self-appointed moral watchdogs and which Kubrick then withdrew from circulation.

By now seclusion was setting in seriously, and Kubrick made only four films in the next 27 years, starting with the under-rated "Barry Lyndon" (1975).

He also made "The Shining" (1978) and "Full Metal Jacket" (1987).

He announced in 1974 that he was settling permanently in England, though it was rumoured he was continuing to keep American time — sleeping during the day and working at night. He refused to give interviews, and his isolation was so complete that in 1996 an English fraudster successfully impersonated him for several months before being found out.

In 1996, he embarked on the romantic comedy "Eyes Wide Shut" with Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, devoting more than a year to filming after replacing a leading actor in a change that required several million dollars' worth of reshooting.

Born in New York in 1928, the son of a successful doctor, Kubrick was never short of money. When his father gave him a Graflex camera as a birthday present, he took to eavesdropping on New York life with the camera concealed in a paper bag.

Though he made a start working with RKO, his early documentaries and the two low-budget features on which he learnt his craft were largely financed by his own savings and well-to-do relatives. He belonged to the last wave of filmmakers to achieve prominence before film school became the principal means of entering the industry.

Kubrick's films were almost invariably adapted from novels, though he displayed a particular interest in themes relating to human fallibility and the impossibility of imposing rational systems on an irrational universe. One of his trademark creations was the spaceship computer Hal which, in "2001: A Space Odyssey," turns against its masters and proceeds to kill them.

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